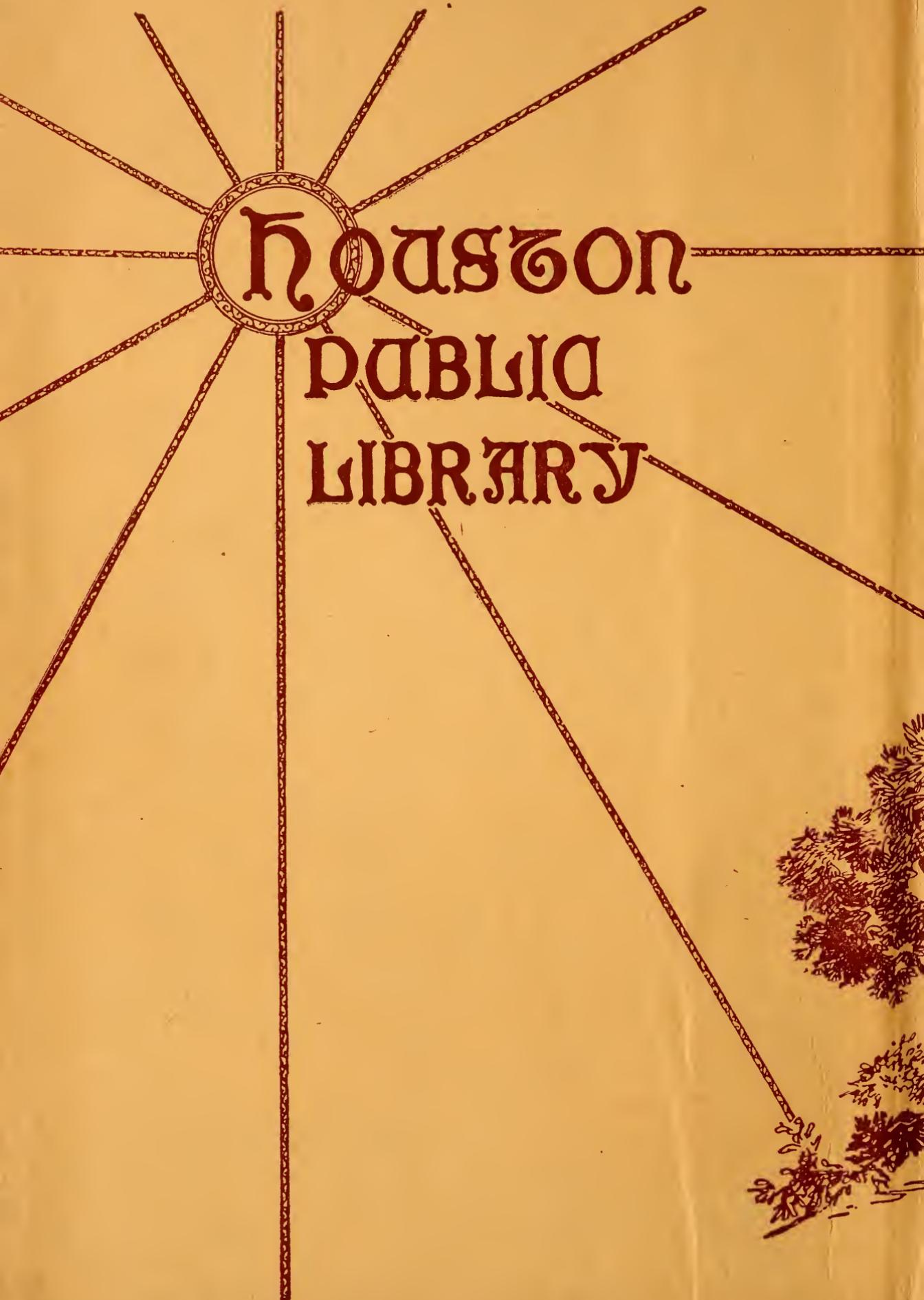


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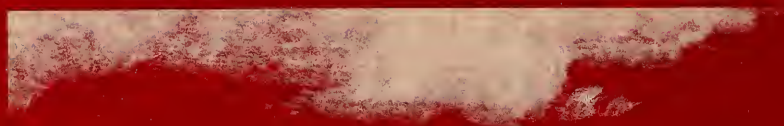




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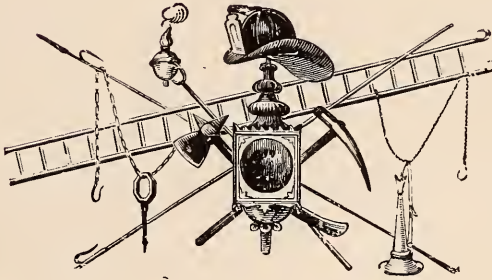
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# FIRE FIGHTERS

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## HOUSTON

1838-1915



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HOUSTON, TEXAS  
1915

By CHAS. D. GREEN  
Member of Mechanic No. 6

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Hindman fire report

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## DEDICATED TO MY COMRADES

*Commemorative of the noble acts of heroism and self-sacrifice performed by the valiant members of the Houston Volunteer Fire Department in the early days when the foundation for a great and thriving metropolis was being laid, the major portion of whom have answered the last roll call; and of those who comprise the splendid Houston Fire Department, whose hazardous occupation in saving life and property entitles them to substantial recognition, this book is respectfully dedicated by the author,*

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DEALY-ADEY CO., HOUSTON.





**FIREMEN'S MONUMENT IN GLENWOOD.**

On May 30, 1888, the Volunteer Fire Department, composed of Protection No. 1, Hook and Ladder No. 1, Liberty No. 2, Stonewall No. 3, Mechanic No. 6, and Curtin No. 9, bought a lot in section C, Glenwood cemetery, for interment of deceased members of the Department. The consideration was \$300. In June agitation was begun for the erection of a firemen's monument, and with the proceeds from balls, picnics, excursions, theatricals, donations, etc., an order was given T. E. Byrnes for the stone memorial, surmounted by a life-size statue of Robert Brewster, the oldest living fireman of that period. This statue was made in Carrara, Italy, of fine Italian marble, and was received in Houston December 24, 1889. It stands 5 feet 2 inches in height, weighs 1400 pounds, and cost \$3,500. The unveiling took place with appropriate ceremonies on Sunday, April 6, 1900.



## Introductory.

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**I**N formulating this history of the "Fire Fighters of Houston, 1838-1915," the author claims no originality beyond 1872, and cordially acknowledges close association with newspaper files, personally-kept scrap books of old citizens many years gone to their last reward, and reminiscences of good and true men who have spent from half to three-quarters of a century in this section of Texas; whose memories, despite advancing years of their lives, are remarkably recollective of the strenuous seasons leading down from the capitulation of the Mexican General Santa Anna on the battlefield of San Jacinto. Sincere effort has been exercised to make the work a true narration, devoid of exaggeration or deliberate misstatement, inasmuch as it is a mutual undertaking by many old volunteer firemen of Houston to commemorate to sacred recollection deeds of daring and acts of charity performed by the Volunteer Fire Department during sixty years of city building. Volunteer service was graciously and freely bestowed, the love of each man for his neighbor being manifest in a mutually helpful organization to protect home and life from the ravages and destruction of the demon Fire, to minister succor and relief to the unfortunate, and make of their community a peaceful, happy and contented settlement.

The author deeply deplores his inability to secure official data during the period of the Republic—1836 to 1845, and the ante-bellum period—1845 to 1861; also his inability to mention many worthy men whose services were crowned with honor.

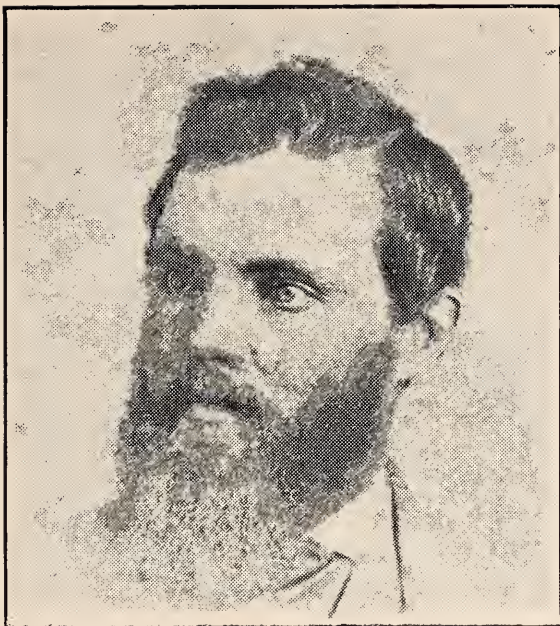
The author sincerely wishes that the work may prove to be worthy of the friendly consideration of those who regard the Volunteer Fire Fighter as one of God's noblemen, and the paid fire fighter as an exponent of a noble and exalted avocation.

THE AUTHOR.

Houston, Texas,

December 15, 1915.





**GUSTAV AUGUST FORSGARD.**  
**Oldest Volunteer Fireman in Houston.**

G. A. Forsgard is the oldest living member of the Volunteer Fire Department of Houston. He cast his lot in the Bayou City a few years after the Allens platted the town, and has experienced the trials and vicissitudes all through the years intervening since 1848. He belonged to the Blue Bucket Brigade for fifteen years, and later joined Protection No. 1, when it received its engine. Mr. Forsgard has lived an honorable and useful life to the ripe age of 83 years. He is the oldest living Past Master of Holland Lodge, A. F. and A. M., and prizes beyond degree a past master's jewel presented him by his lodge in 1913. This venerable old fireman and respected citizen resides at No. 3618 San Jacinto Street.

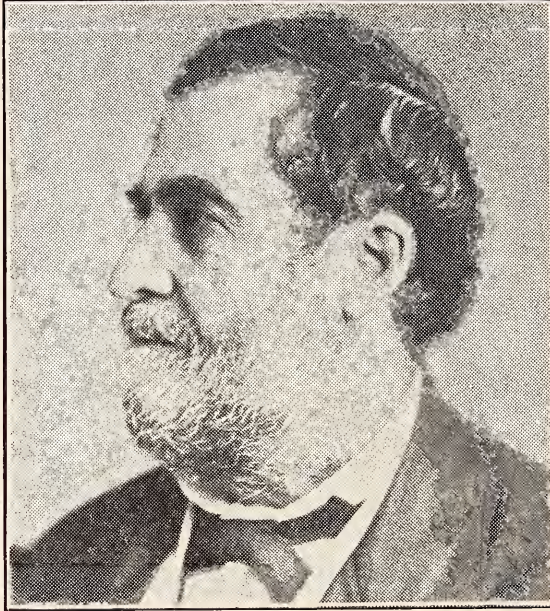


## Houston's Earliest Days.

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**W**HILE it is generally admitted by historians that Mrs. Mary Wilkins, with her two daughters and a son-in-law, Dr. Phelps, were the first settlers (1822) in territory now embraced in Houston's limits, it is certain that settlers were sprinkled all over this section of the State when the battle of San Jacinto decided Texas independence (1836). Mrs. Wilkins had constructed for her the first house in Harrisburg County, at a point about one-half mile south of Buffalo Bayou where it makes a bend at old Frosttown, in the northeastern limits of the city. Antedating the coming of the Wilkins family, but in the same year, a surveyor by the name of Henry Rider landed on the peninsula now called Morgan's Point. Two days later John Iiams landed at the same place, joining Mr. Rider. This was on May 1, 1822, and these men are presumed to have been a surveying party sent in advance of Mrs. Wilkins, all hailing from New York State.

Frosttown was a settlement, in 1826, with about twenty inhabitants, and by the year 1836 the number had grown to half a hundred men, women and children. Augustus Chapman Allen and John Kirby Allen, the founders of Houston, had lived at Nacogdoches until 1835, when they, with their families, located in the Frosttown settlement and were living there when the battle of San Jacinto was fought. Sharp land speculators they were, they intuitively saw the making of a city at the head of tidewater. Accordingly they bought a portion of the John Austin survey (present site of Houston) from a Mrs. Parrott, and began the work of platting it. It was while General Houston was a guest at the A. C. Allen home that Mrs. Allen jokingly asked her husband what name he intended giving his little town. "We will name it 'Houston' in honor of our distinguished guest," he replied. Four days after the purchase a plan of advertising had been formulated and everything of a laudable nature about Houston was contained in the prospectus. It was then that Houston began to assume animated pro-



**CAPT. EDWARD W. TAYLOR.**

No man was held in higher esteem as a good Christian citizen than Capt. E. W. Taylor, who departed this life several years ago at a ripe old age. He filled exalted positions within the gift of the people, was a master Mason, a leader in charity work and general affairs. Captain Taylor was for many years president of Protection Fire Company and following his remains to their last resting place were the uniformed firemen of the Department, with many civic societies, the Masonic fraternity, and the public schools, of which he was superintendent many years.

portions. Frostdtown was an independent settlement until in the '70s.

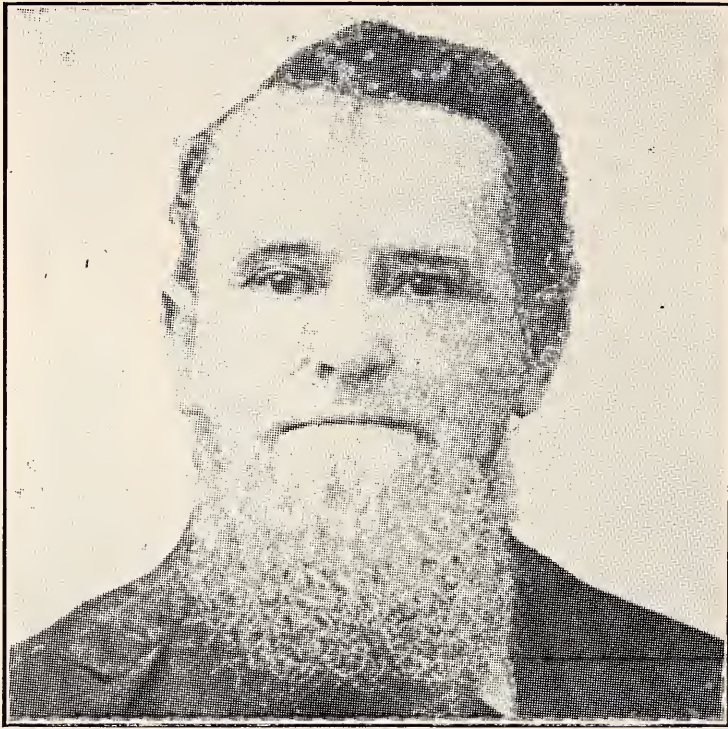
In 1842 Frostdtown secured its first fire-fighting apparatus in the shape of a whiskey barrel strapped with iron to the frame of an old gig. Square-frame handle bars were provided, with extension pulling ropes. This barrel was kept at a central point, filled with water at all times, and in case of fire was hurriedly put into use. Around the barrel at the top were hooks for securely holding buckets to prevent them from being shaken off en route the scene of fire. Aux-



Bucket Brigade in Action as Late as 1872.

iliary to this primitive equipment was a Bucket Brigade, composed of men of the settlement, and comprising buckets and ladders. Each citizen kept a bucket or ladder at his home, and when the cry of "Fire" was raised every available man, in duty bound, responded post haste with his bucket or ladder. Underground cisterns and shallow wells were common and furnished the only water supply for fire extinguishment and providing the only reason for existence of the Bucket Brigade. Arriving at a fire, the laddermen

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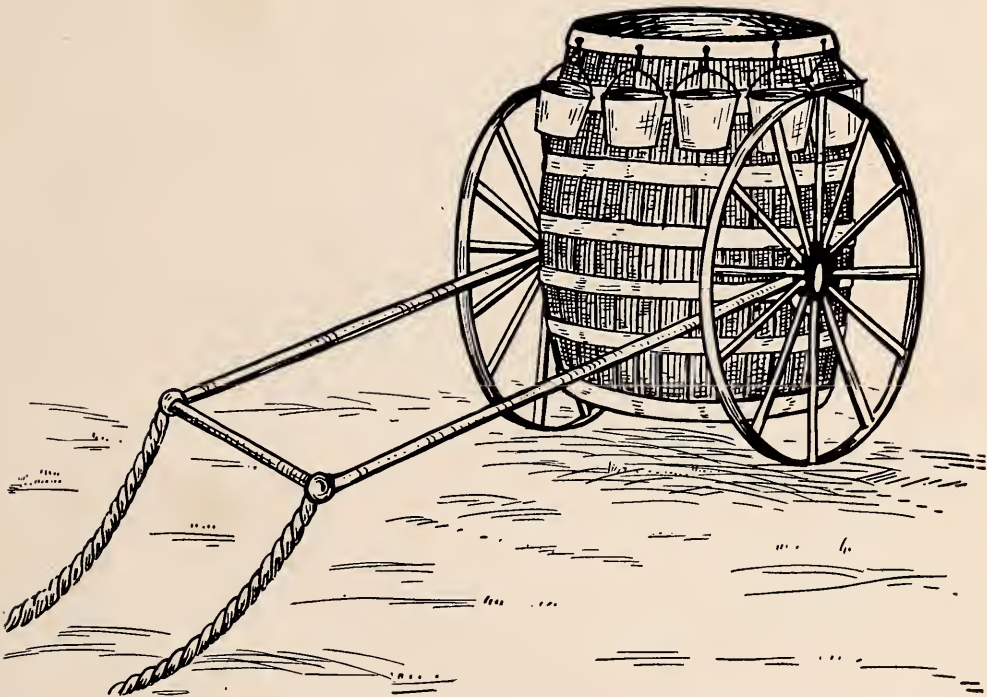


**S. M. McASHAN.**

S. M. McAshan has gone to his reward, but his purity of character, examples of lofty citizenship and deeds of valor and charity not alone place him upon the honor rolls of the Houston Volunteer Firemen, but engrave his memory on the pages of history as a pioneer of Christianity at a time when evil influences outnumbered the good among the people who drifted from other parts. Always his life had been of even tenor. Honesty was his watchword, and with that as a foundation he builded well. For many years he was the confidential adviser of the elder T. W. House and fiduciary agent for his extensive interests. As an active member of Protection Fire Company No. 1 he not only gave of his time and money to his company, but assisted in the organization by the young men of other fire companies, and espoused all efforts to improve living conditions. Enduring monuments to his good name are revered by Houstonians.

climbed to the roof and with axes made holes therein for pouring water on the flames.

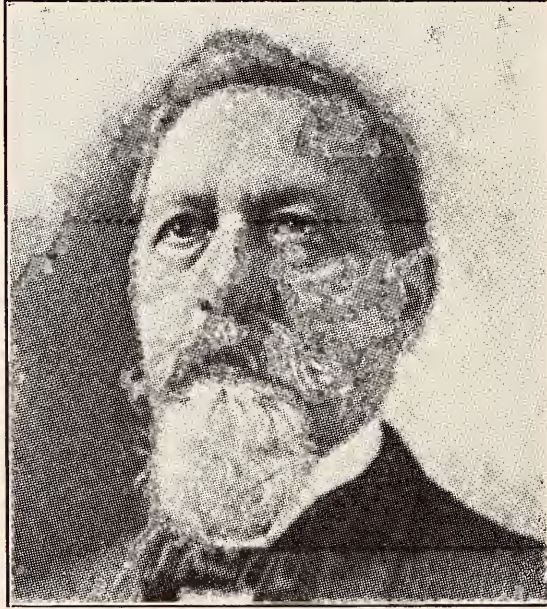
The Allens' boosting literature concerning the newly discovered Utopia of the West had magical effect in bringing new settlers, and soon a town of tents covered the space between where Congress street now is and the bayou. The original plat of Houston embraced 62 blocks. Log houses were built as fast as trees could be felled and hauled, and great preparations began for the location of the capitol of the State. By the close of 1837 Houston had a population



Apparatus Used in Frosttown (1842).

of about 1000 people, and was the capital of the nation and county. In June of that year the Texas Congress granted the town permission to incorporate.

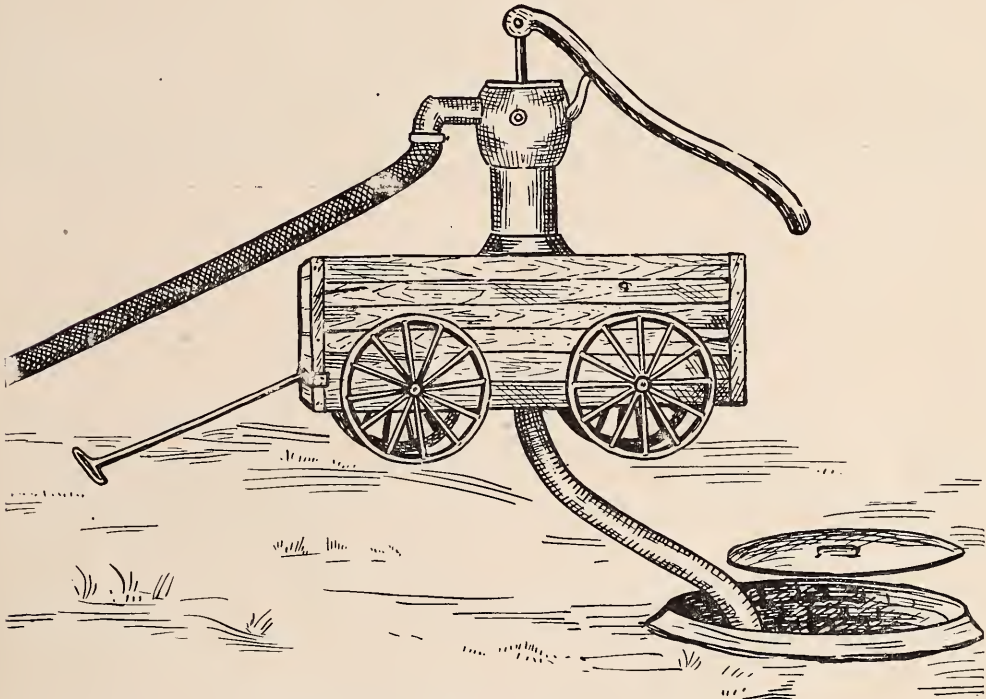
Man's ambition and energies were at high tension. Augustus C. Allen left nothing undone to give the new town all of the necessary helpmeets to add momentum to the sale of lots, and, incidentally thereto, the enhancement of their value. Burning brush had set fire to several cabins, and Mr. Allen conceived the idea of organizing a Bucket Brigade to be named "Protection," symbolizing the good to



**HENRY S. FOX.**

A leading banker and financier, business man, all-round good citizen and voluntēer fireman was Henry S. Fox. During his life he dispensed charity to many deserving ones, and fortune favored him in his every transaction. Mr. Fox considered it every good man's duty to join the Volunteer Firemen, and he spared neither time nor money in advancing the interests and encouraging the ambitions of young men organizing companies. Mr. Fox was one of the reorganizers of Protection No. 1.

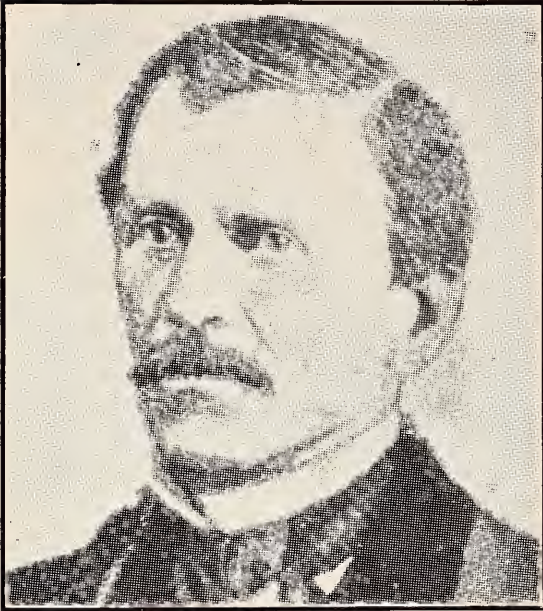
emanate to the community from organized effort and systematic conduct of men obeying orders in time of excitement and confusion. When the company had been formed a charter was applied for and granted (1838) by Congress, the charter name being "Protection No. 1," and its motto "*Semper fidelis.*" It was considered a breach of citizenship for an able-bodied man to fail to respond to a fire alarm and assist a neighbor in distress. It was not compulsory that he should belong to an organized company, however, but he was expected to do his part and not be a drone in the hive.



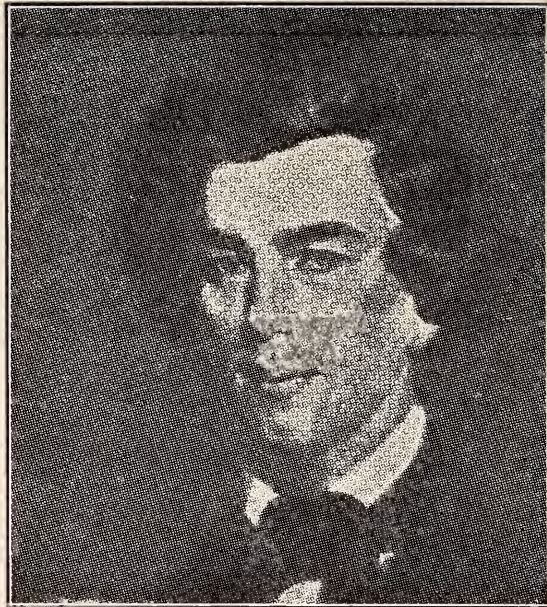
Home-made Fire Engine (Houston, 1847).

The women, too, would help in the passing of buckets and otherwise render valuable assistance, and as late as 1853, when the first hand-pump engine was procured, the fair sex worked at the brakes side by side with their husbands, sons and brothers.

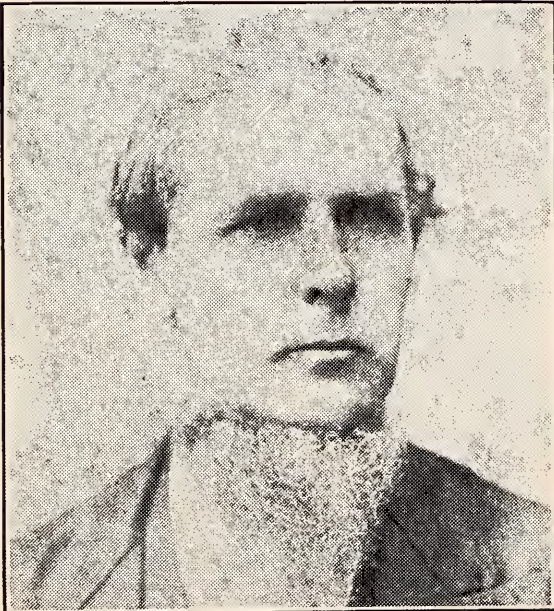
Nearly every home and business house had its underground cistern, it being necessary for housing rain water for domestic use. The late winter rains were stored, and when cisterns were full, along about the first of April, the wooden gutter leading from the roof to the cistern was re-



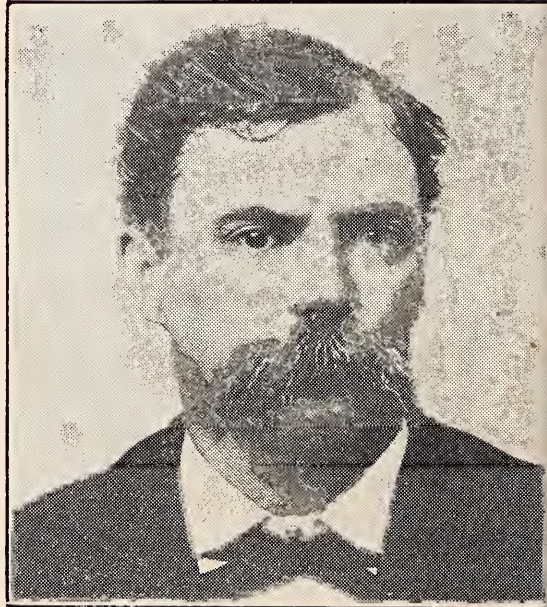
**AUGUST C. ALLEN**  
(Founder of Houston)  
First Volunteer Fireman



**WILLIAM MARSH RICE**  
(Founder of Rice Institute)  
Member of Liberty No. 2



**JAMES A CUSHMAN**  
First Department Chief



**EX-CHIEF MARTIN CURTIN**  
Houston Volunteers

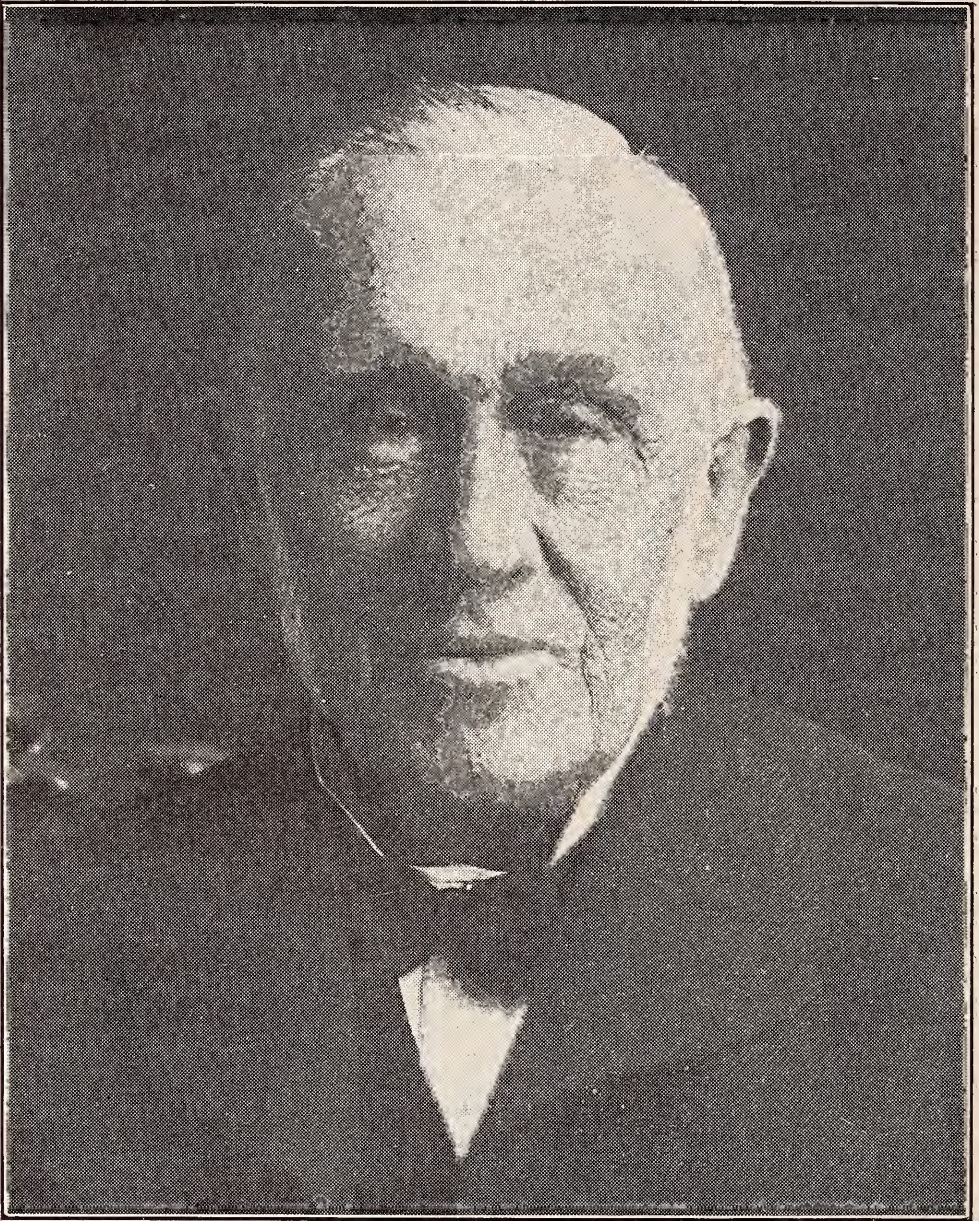
moved. Thus cool and wholesome water was provided during the summer. But firemen were no respecters of persons or quality of water, and woe betide the cistern located nearer the fire.

In 1847 a force pump was mounted on a wagon frame and housed on Congress Square (Market Square), intended as auxiliary to the Bucket Brigade, but its novelty and effectiveness so inspired the firemen that, instead of some going for the pump while others manned the buckets and ladders, practically every man made a dash for the "engine house." Then the race for the scene of action! An eyewitness states he has seen 200 men pushing the little wagon along, while flames were playing havoc.

Liberty No. 2 was organized in 1852, and soon thereafter the wealthy members of the company, composing such staunch citizens as T. W. House, William D. Cleveland and William M. Rice, purchased a Hunnelman hand engine in Boston. The machine arrived in 1853. Its cost was \$2000. This engine, with the force pump and several Bucket Brigades, comprised the fire fighting force of Houston until April, 1858, when Hook and Ladder Company No. 1 was organized. A home-made truck was at once constructed for the wall climbers and it proved to be a valuable adjunct to the force.

In this year (1858) the twenty-year charter of Protection No. 1 expired, and upon being re-chartered the company ordered a duplicate of the engine belonging to Liberty No. 2. The order was nearly a year in being filled, for the engine did not arrive until December, 1859. This was also a Hunnelman engine from Boston and cost \$2000.

It was on Monday night, February 28, 1859, that the town had its first conflagration, and as Liberty No. 2's hand-pump had seen several years' hard service, it was virtually worn out and could do little to combat the flames among the score or more wooden structures. The entire block bounded by Congress, Main, Franklin and Travis streets was swept out of existence, with a loss of \$50,000. Nothing had occurred to rouse the people to a sense of action until this fire wiped out a goodly portion of the business district. The firemen



**AUGUST BERING.**

November 29, 1915, August Bering celebrated his 88th birthday with friends whose esteem he has held for scores of years and with relatives and descendants who live in the sunshine of his old and happy life. He is truly an old-timer in this section, and away back in the years past was a member of the volunteer fire-fighting force called the "Bucket Brigade," before the days of the force pump. Mr. Bering has been blessed with good health and a degree of prosperity and has always shared with others who needed help. He is one of the founders of the Bering Memorial Church, which will live in the after years as a constant reminder of the time when August Bering was a living model of good and true citizenship, uprightness, sobriety and Christian practice. Mr. Bering is still in splendid vigor, a regular attendant at his church—the Bering Memorial Methodist, and recounts with acute memory the far bygone day when he landed on Houston soil. He rode on the first railroad train out of the city, and recollects the first fire in the business section during the '50s.

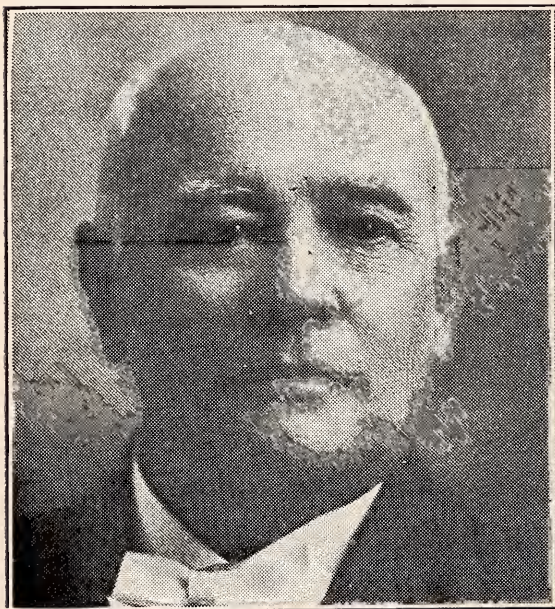
had never received recognition from the city council in any way, all expenses incurred being met through public subscription. Popular clamor and indignation finally caught the ears of the city fathers, and during April, 1859, the council let contract to John Trentem to place an underground cistern 12x12 feet at the intersection of Preston and Main streets, with laterals connecting with the buildings on the four corners for saving and storing rain water. After this cistern was finished a continued dry season followed and the scheme of thus securing water for fire extinguishment was found inadequate. Two additional cisterns were then placed, one at Congress and Main and another at Commerce and Main. The latter was of larger dimensions than the others, said to be 20x12 feet. Later a cistern 12x12 feet was placed at the intersection of Texas avenue and Main street, and a smaller one near the old J. T. D. Wilson home on Louisiana street. The method by which these cisterns were filled was by pumping from the bayou at the foot of Main street into the Commerce street cistern and from one to another in rotation. It was a two-days' task to fill these reservoirs. The cistern near the Wilson home was filled with rain water and seldom used. These old cisterns went out of service with the advent of the water works in 1879, and the last was filled in just previously to the paving of Main street with asphalt a few years ago.

Encouraged by the action of the council in providing fire cisterns, the firemen decided to organize a Department composed of Protection No. 1, Liberty No. 2, and Hook and Ladder No. 1, each company to be represented in the central body by three delegates. From among these delegates were to be chosen a chief, assistant chief and secretary-treasurer. The delegates were: No. 1, S. M. McAshan, Robert Brewster and Charles Wichman; No. 2, W. D. Cleveland, James A. Cushman and E. L. Bremond; Hook and Ladder No. 1, C. C. Beavens, Will Lambert and H. P. Roberts. At the first meeting of the Department James A. Cushman was chosen chief and E. L. Bremond secretary.

Under a governing head the Department was doing splendidly until the call to arms in preparation for the civil war. It became disrupted.

**E. C. CRAWFORD.**

Coming to Houston in the late '70s, E. C. Crawford embarked in business and identified himself with all public measures. He joined Protection No. 1 and was elected its president at a time when disruption of the company seemed imminent on account of progressive measures advocated by the younger members and opposed by the older ones. The former elected him, and "Progress" was the motto thenceforth. He harmonized the factions and soon the company was in a new home, with improved equipment.

**ANDREW J. WILLIAMS.**

One of the organizers of Mechanic No. 6, and in the late '70s was assistant chief of the Volunteer Department, with Chief Tom Robinson. Mr. Williams has seen a great deal of the making of Houston and was for 35 years in the employ of the Houston and Texas Central Railway. He was a fire fighter of the first water, and looks backward with pleasure on the days of his volunteer service.

Mayor T. W. House, in 1862, appointed Ed Bremond chief, vice J. A. Cushman, who had been detailed to make munitions of war at his foundry (present Henke & Pillot's cotton yard). Mr. Bremond served two years, when Sam K. McIlhenny succeeded him to 1865. Then Frank Fabj was chosen and served until June, 1866.

It was early in 1866 that Liberty No. 2 procured the first steam engine in Houston. It was a Silsby and cost \$4500. Its first location was on Franklin street where the Joseph F. Meyer Company is now located. This engine was the admiration of the populace, especially the ladies. Later the engine house of this company was corner Franklin and Fannin streets where the old postoffice now stands.

With the coming of the steamer and returning of the boys from the war, the Department was reorganized, with Frank Fabj as chief, who served about two years under the new order of things.

The big fire of 1859 was still painfully fresh in the minds of the people almost a decade later. Protection No. 1 realized that the hand-pump engine it secured late in the year of the conflagration was out of date and unable to make a creditable showing should another disastrous blaze occur, and consequently placed an order for a new and improved steamer, which arrived in Houston on February 16, 1867. No. 1's hand engine was traded in on the new purchase.

Stonewall No. 3 was organized in 1867 and immediately added spice to the firemanic family.

Dr. Tom P. Robinson was chief (1868), with Chris. C. Beavens first assistant and Andrew J. Williams second assistant. Chief Robinson resigned in 1869 and Ed L. Hopkins was elected. Mr. Hopkins finished Dr. Robinson's term and served an additional year (1871). Some dissatisfaction arose, Mr. Hopkins refusing re-election. His successor was not chosen and the Department became nil so far as a central body was concerned. Each company acted along independent lines.

On October 20, 1873, Mechanic No. 6 entered the fold, and the real fireworks began. One of the requirements to become a member was the applicant must be a mechanic.



**CHRIS. C. BEAVENS.**

Chris. Beavens served in the Volunteer Fire Department probably longer than any man ever connected with it. The records back in the '60s refer to him as an active member, and that record comes on down through the years until the volunteers were mustered out in 1895. He was a second assistant chief and a first assistant for many years, from personal choice, although the chiefship was offered to him on several occasions. Mr. Beavens was a member of Hook and Ladder No. 1, and a good and popular citizen. He died in 1903 at the age of 61 years.

They were a "wild and woolly" bunch of youngsters and expected everybody and everything to "give them the road."

In May, 1874, the Department was again reorganized upon a firm foundation and has since stemmed the tides of adversity with the help of philanthropic citizens. In this year the city council inaugurated a system of granting help to the several companies, such as paying feed bills for the horses and helping to meet housekeepers' salaries. This assistance, with monthly dues of the members, fines, etc., doubtless sustained the Department. Gradually the city's help increased and the Department grew in proportion.

At the reorganization meeting William W. Williams was elected chief; Chris. C. Beavens, first assistant; F. E. Hahn, second assistant.

On September 24, 1874, a new company (Brooks No. 5) was organized in the Fifth ward, composed principally of citizens of that section of the city.

In 1875 the Department officers were William Williams, chief; Chris. C. Beavens, first assistant; John H. B. House, second assistant. During this year the City Mills in the Second ward burned, entailing a loss of \$200,000.

At the annual election in May, 1876, J. H. B. House was chosen chief; Zach T. Hogan, first assistant; C. C. Beavens, second assistant. This year the fiercest conflagration the city had ever seen was the burning of the handsome \$400,000 market and opera house. Chief House served one year and refused re-election for another term.

Joseph F. Meyer, who had proved his mettle by hard service as foreman of Stonewall No. 3, then became chief (1878), and for two years directed the Department. His first assistant was John F. Morriss; second, Martin Curtin; with H. M. Curtin as secretary of the Department and Henry Scherffius treasurer.

Martin Curtin was chief in 1880-81, with Albert Levy first assistant; H. M. Curtin, second assistant; William Alexander, secretary, and Robert Brewster, treasurer.

On May 1, 1881, Curtin No. 9 was organized, with location at No. 17 Commerce avenue, between Travis and Milam.



**EX-CHIEF JOSEPH F. MEYER.**

Leading business man and active Volunteer Fireman. Was the mainstay of Stonewall No. 3 for many years, serving in all positions where he was needed. He was earnest, sincere and ambitious in all that he did, and won the esteem of every member of the Department, who hailed him Chief in 1878. Mr. Meyer served with credit and after relinquishing the chieftaincy continued as an active volunteer until mustered out. The Jos. F. Meyer Company, wholesale and retail hardware, is one of the leading business houses of Houston, and Mr. Meyer is its managing head.

This company was originally started by young boys and stationed in the Fourth ward (north), at present Houston's Sixth ward, and its mechanical make-up was a force pump on a home-made wooden body. H. M. Curtin was sponsor for the boys and assisted them in many ways to perfect themselves for duty. His patronage went to the larger boys of the company when they weeded out the little fellows and procured a larger engine. Later Curtin 9 went to the Fifth ward.

In 1882-83 William H. Coyle was chief; Albert Levy, first assistant; Alex Pastoriza, second assistant; J. K. P. Gillaspie, secretary; Robert Brewster, treasurer.

Ben A. Riesner was chief, with John Giesberg and Joe Clede assistants during 1884-85. The full equipment for fire fighting purposes consisted of six companies, with five paid drivers on constant duty, one second-class Silsby steamer, one Bolton hand engine, two hook and ladder trucks and four hose reels.

In 1886-87 James K. P. Gillaspie was elected chief; Martin Curtin, first assistant; Henry Ross, second assistant; C. W. Rutgers, secretary; H. M. Curtin, treasurer.

Henry Ross was the youngest chief ever elected. He represented Mechanic No. 6 in the central body and was chosen to serve during 1888. His first assistant was Eugene R. Parker; second assistant, Robert M. Floeck; with Jacob Keller as secretary and Henry M. Curtin treasurer.

In 1888-90 E. R. Parker was chief; Frank McGowen, first assistant; Jos. J. Walker, second assistant; F. C. Fourmy, secretary; Henry M. Curtin, treasurer.

Thos. H. Martin succeeded Chief Parker. His assistants were J. J. Walker and John Roessler; Henry Stamm was secretary and Simon L. Sam treasurer. Chief Martin served until 1894 and during his incumbency had as assistants Frank Horsford and James Whalen his second year, and James Whalen and Lee Brown the third year. The other officers of the Department remained the same as for the first year of Mr. Martin's chiefship. When Chief Martin assumed office the city council agreed to pay the salaries



**EX-CHIEF W. H. COYLE.**

A most practical chief was W. H. Coyle in 1882-3. He had been a volunteer in the Department, with membership in Hook and Ladder No. 1, where he held all offices of honor and trust, before he was chosen chief. Mr. Coyle personally knew no fear and always led his men in critical moments. He seemed to understand just how far to take risk in the execution of his firemanic duty, and only once did he miss his calculation—at the burning of the Fifth Ward Hotel, when he was injured, Zach Hogan fatally wounded, and others more or less painfully hurt by the sudden collapse of a brick wall. Mr. Coyle was popular among all classes of citizens, and his death was keenly felt by the business and social elements of the city.

of five fire housekeepers and a salary of \$100 per month to the chief. The city had assisted the Department for several years previously, and this official action to pay a stipulated sum each month was received by the volunteers as indicative that the city government would soon place the entire Department upon a salary basis.

William P. Siebert was one of the most enthusiastic firemen the volunteers ever had. He was not only a worker, but an organizer, having assisted in organizing some of the later companies. Siebert No. 10, the last in the old Department (August 24, 1894), was organized by Billy Siebert and named after him. It was always a hose wagon, but Mr. Siebert had about perfected arrangements to put in a steamer when the Department went into paid service. Mr. Siebert later placed the steamer at Brunner, organizing a company, a party of citizens constructing an engine house. While the young town's financial condition was such that no monetary aid could be rendered the company, Mayor Chas. D. Green and Aldermen Hoebel, Alexander and others joined the membership and rendered personal service to sustain it. Mr. Siebert's ambition never waned until every effort was exhausted to keep the steamer in Brunner (an independent township three miles west of Houston, and now in the new city limits of Houston). A feasible scheme of Mr. Siebert was to sink fire cisterns for water supply, but the money could not be raised, and the engine was moved away.

At the Department election in May, 1894, a warm contest developed between Stonewall No. 3 and Mechanic No. 6 over the choice of chief, the former espousing the cause of its old foreman, Thomas Ravell, against Chief Martin. Mr. Ravell was the victor.

The movement for a paid Department was urged by the insurance companies, their agents rightfully claiming that the local government was not affording the fire protection that it should. The burning of St. Joseph's Infirmary during this year (1894), with the loss of several lives, on account of defective hose, etc., aroused considerable indignation. Alderman Si Packard, an enthusiastic volunteer fire-



**EX-CHIEF B. A. RIESNER.**

The subject of this picture has ever since his residence in Houston been a man of affairs. As a blacksmith at the forge his counsel was often sought in the conduct of local public matters. His popularity increased as the years went by and finally he was chosen as one of the city aldermen; for many years he was chairman of the local democratic executive committee, and in later times became advisor in State elective matters, and was recently appointed a member of the board of regents of the Agricultural and Mechanical College, which honor he declined on account of personal business.

(Continued on page 31)

man, introduced in the council a resolution inquiring as to the feasibility of an entire paid Department. Considerable opposition developed. Some of the companies in the volunteer service were reported to be subservient to the wishes of political tricksters. No opposition to the change, however, was made by the firemen—they were only too glad to be relieved of an onerous duty. Mayor John T. Browne ("Honest John") gave his sanction to the change when he learned it could be made without the city taking over the real estate belonging to the companies, the program simply involving the purchase of apparatus, horses, etc., and paying rental for the property. Alderman Packard formulated the proper ordinance and it passed the council under suspension of the rules at the succeeding session of the board of aldermen. Mayor Browne appointed Chief Ravell to take charge of the Houston Fire Department, and old volunteer days became at once a matter of history.

Then the Department's central station was at the corner of San Jacinto and Prairie avenue, with fire stations and apparatus located in the several wards.

Fred Kersten was first assistant chief during Chief Ravell's incumbency in the old and new Departments.

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During the years 1882-3-4, when the Houston Volunteer Fire Department was at the crucial point of its existence, he accepted the chieftainship and brought the Department through its peril and placed it on the high road to success.

As time passed Ben Riesner's importance as a director of affairs became greater in the minds of the people, and he was elected to the city council in 1886. He served three terms of six years, and was chairman of the fire committee of that body during that time. He is the father of the Gamewell fire alarm system in Houston, and the active adherent of the creation of a new and better fire equipment. It was while he was chairman of the fire committee that Protection No. 1 secured a new steamer to take the place of the old hose reel so long used by that popular organization. After the department changed from volunteer to paid service, Mr. Riesner constructed the first two hose wagons—that of Nos. 7 and 10. He also was instrumental in securing for Hook and Ladder No. 1 its first improved truck.

Mr. Riesner was elected chief from Mechanic No. 6 during 1882-3 after several years service under Chiefs William Williams and J. H. B. House. He has held practically all official positions in his company and in the Department, and at present is in active manufacturing business at Nos. 813-15 Commerce Street.



**HENRY M. CURTIN.**

Henry M. Curtin was 19 years of age when the photograph was taken of him in No. 3's uniform (he had donned this attire for parade purposes). Mr. Curtin was secretary and treasurer of the Department, and served as first and second assistant under several chiefs. His membership dates back in the '60s with Liberty No. 2. He took exceptional interest in the Volunteer Department and when No. 9 company was organized it was named in honor of him—"Curtin Nine." Mr. Curtin is a representative citizen of Houston.

## Firemen's Charitable Association.

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**W**HILE the Volunteer Department contained on its roster some who were firemen for parade purposes only, and some who escaped jury duty by belonging to the volunteer service and never had on a red or blue shirt or attended a fire in their lives—"Sunday firemen," as they were known—still a great majority of them were self-sacrificing heroes, ready at all times to risk their lives for their neighbors' welfare. Some were more charitably inclined, and organized to help the distressful needy free of charge and without hope of future reward or emolument. Individual charity was dispensed quite freely, but not until the Firemen's Charitable Association was organized in 1867 did the wholesome effects of doing good for others become manifest. About 50, comprising one-fourth of the volunteer membership, combined in this most laudable work for local relief purposes, previous to the great epidemic of yellow fever in 1867, but before the dreadful scourge had subsided the organization was furnishing relief, doctors, medicine and money in nearly all the State of Texas. It was the only organization of the kind in the State and received numerous calls for help from all parts of Texas.

No records are known to be in existence concerning the work of this body of charity workers, but an old photograph pictures a group of some whose descendants still remain in the land where peace and contentment reign among the multitude who followed the open way they made for progress; where thousands of little children are reaping a golden harvest of education made possible by their efforts; where civilization in its onward sweep tells the sweet but sad story of privations endured by those ancestors that we might enjoy the glories of an empire with all the uplifting tendencies of modern advancement, and where the deeds of charity and abnegation sown by them in the dim past are today in full fruition in hundreds of benevolent institutions that find



**FIREMEN'S CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION, 1867.**

Standing—Captain Jim Martin, Joe Cramer, C. W. Hurl, Hy. P. Roberts, John Reichman, Pat Dowling, Ed L. Hopkins, August Hoffman. Sitting—Jack Burke, Fritz Mohl, R. W. Shaw, Tom Whitmarsh (president); Jesse C. Wagner (secretary); Max Maas, Chris C. Beavens (assistant chief).

sustenance from a long list of silent givers who dispense charity for charity's sake.

Those who appear in the photograph mentioned are:

Captain Jim Martin, with descendants living on San Felipe street, Houston.

Joe Cramer was a merchant on Main street. His widow is living with her daughter, Mrs. Will Scholibo, 2915 Travis. Cramer was with Stonewall Jackson when he was killed.

C. W. Hurd, son Charles W. Hurd, 2305 Commerce.

Henry P. Roberts, father of Ingham S. Roberts, and two children by his second wife (nee Miss Garnett).

John Reichman, city secretary, 1874-1886, uncle of H. S. Fox; daughter living in New York.

Pat Dowling, brother of Dick Dowling of Sabine Pass fame; widow living at Austin.

Jack Burke, father of Mrs. Lillie Bailey, brother of ex-County Judge Frank Burke and son of ex-Mayor A. J. Burke.

Fritz Mohl, no descendants.

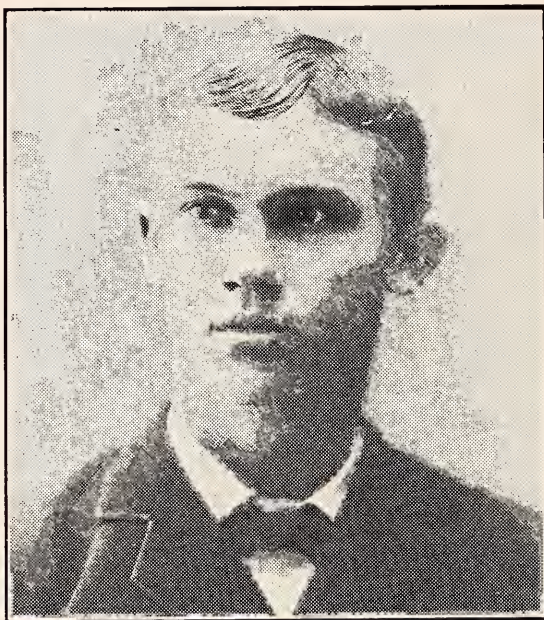
R. W. Shaw, a resident of Galveston.

Tom W. Whitmarsh, nephew living in Houston, son at Fuqua, Texas.

Chris C. Beavens, widow and children living in Houston.

Ed. L. Hopkins, uncle of Mrs. George W. Larendon; recently deceased at Natchez, Miss.

Jesse Wagner, uncle of Ingham S. Roberts; residence in New Orleans.



**EX-CHIEF HENRY ROSS.**

Henry Ross was the youngest chief (1887-8) the Volunteer Department had in its forty years existence. He was second assistant under Chief Gillaspie and was promoted over First Assistant Martin Curtin, who had been chief in 1880. Mr. Ross was a member of Mechanic No. 6, and when elected chief represented his company in the central body. Only one big fire occurred during his incumbency of the chieftainship and he handled it with skill. Mr. Ross today is chief of the cabinet-making department of the Houston Ice & Brewing Association, one of the big industries of Houston.

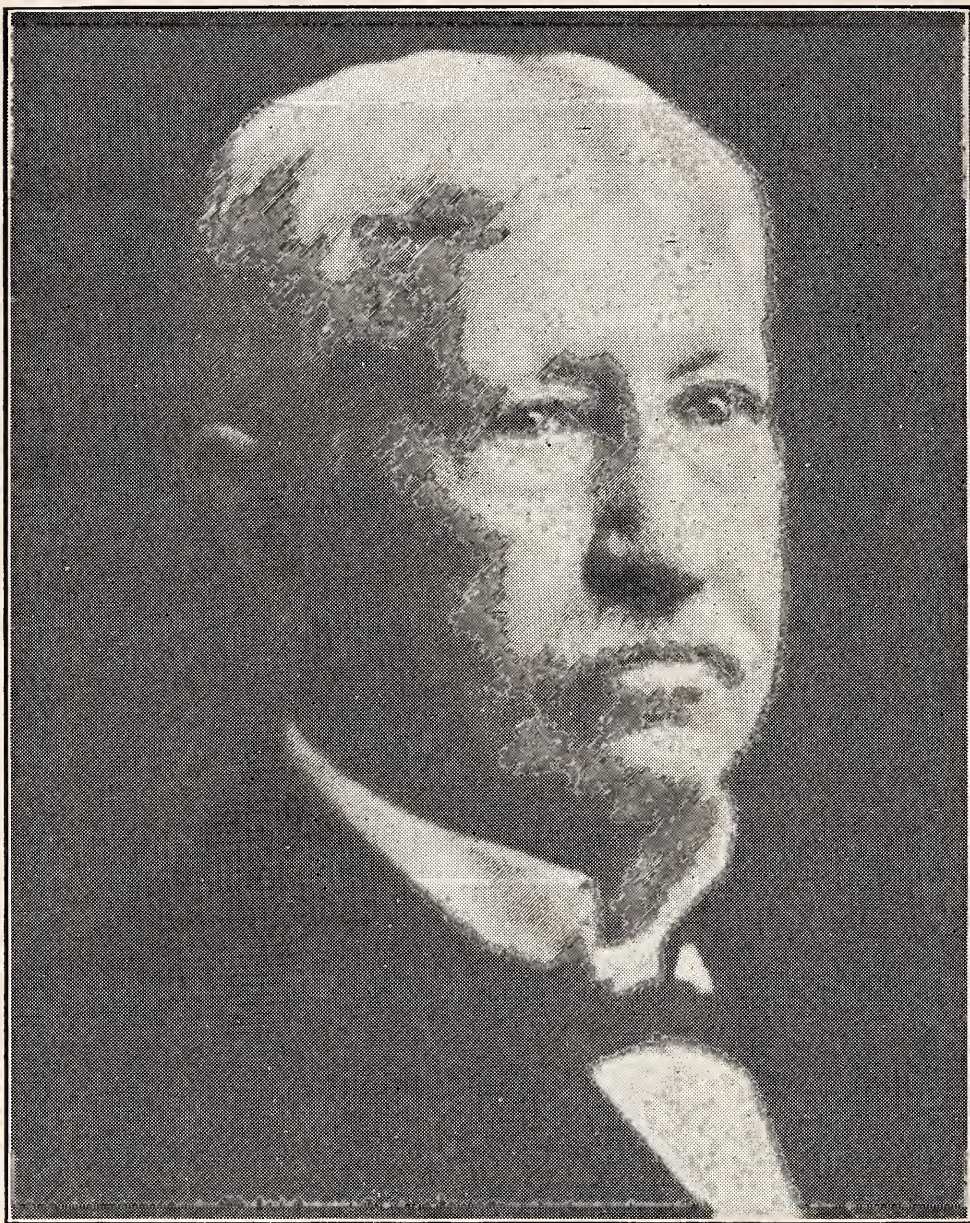
## The First Fire Company.

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FEW people are living whose recollections date back to the time of the founding of the first company of fire fighters in Texas, and not many are left to repeat first statements of recollections of incidents that transpired many years ago, before the Lone Star cast its benignant light upon this portion of God's universe, and the triumph of the white man made Freedom the sustaining watchword to all who sought homes in this new land of undeveloped plenty. Nature seemed to tell the story of hidden wealth from the earth's surface deep down to stratas of precious metals and all the ingredients tradition has taught us to believe belonged to the abiding place of a demon with long claws, smiling countenance and beastly temperament. The rich soil everywhere proclaimed its bounteous yielding capacity at the mere touch of human hand; the fields, arrayed in gorgeous green, mutely called the husbandman to render aid in supplanting their rank products for greater fruition to benefit mankind; the forests, in their majestic beauty, awaited the woodman's ax to transform their massive trees into places of habitation for all comers.

Wistful eyes had awaited the rout of the Mexicans, and the influx of newcomers was great to accept the alluring invitation of the Allens to adopt the new Houston as home. Houses sprang up as if by magic, churches were established, schools were organized and brought into useful service, and the new town took on animation that augured well for the big Houston of today. Buffalo Bayou, that arm of the sea that has proven the bonanza of the city's importance, was the channel for practically all trade and travel.

That watchful vigilance so necessary in all new settlements in undeveloped territory was ever manifest on account of marauding bands of Indians, and protection to life and property rested upon the shoulders of every adult inhabitant. Protection against fires became so necessary that the first fire company in the State was decided upon.



**CAPT. JERRY L. MITCHELL.**

\* Coming down the line from the earliest days of Houston's existence, Capt. Jerry L. Mitchell is classed in the years 1870-'80 as a member of the Volunteer Department. He first identified himself with Hook and Ladder No. 1, but later joined Protection No. 1 and spent his long term of service with this company. He held positions of responsibility and trust, and through the records of both companies his name is found in connection with their continued progress. Mr. Mitchell's personal character and sound and conservative judgment have ever been recognized by his fellows in placing him at the head of their movements. Today he is one of the big taxpayers of Harris County, continues the same line of business he has been engaged in for many years, and numbers his friends by his acquaintanceship. Mr. Mitchell conducts one of the oldest jewelry houses in the State of Texas under one continuous ownership.

The company was named Protection No. 1, and its service gave a feeling of security that diminished daily cares, furnished satisfying solace at the close of day, and made sleep sweeter to the inhabitants. The fame of old Protection No. 1 will fondly live in the hearts of the generations as they read of the trials and sacrifices of the good men and women who placed Houston on the map.

No records concerning this old fire company are available save through newspapers, and in them the members are referred to as firemen. The names of DeWitt C. Harris, Alex Sessums, Alex McGowen, George Ewing, Orange Swan, A. P. Thompson, Joe H. Shepherd, Henry Donnellan, John Crutcher, A. Groesbeeck, James A. Ballinger, W. A. Latham, L. J. Perkins, Matt Conklin, W. A. Van Alstyne, Ed Daly and others are mentioned as "firemen."

In 1875 Protection No. 1 had 34 active and honorary members. E. W. Taylor was president; John H. B. House, vice president; Robert Brewster, secretary; Wm. Williams, treasurer; Charles Wichman, foreman; James Dow, first assistant; Wm. Cooper, second assistant; George Barker, engineer; Tom Whitmarsh, housekeeper. This set of officers conducted the company's affairs for three years, or until the latter part of 1878, when the steamer was taken from it by attachment for debt due by the city for the purchase of the engine.

For a year or so it had no apparatus, but in 1880 it became a hose company. The water works had been completed, and hose reels and wagons were the order of the day. E. W. Taylor was president; J. H. B. House, vice president; Robert Brewster, secretary and treasurer; Charles Wichman, foreman; John Wagner, first assistant; Henry Damuth, second assistant; J. L. Brown, housekeeper.

1881-82—E. W. Taylor, president; William Williams, vice president; Robert Brewster, secretary and treasurer; John D. Usener, foreman; John Wagner, first assistant; Henry Damuth, second assistant; Conrad Fix, housekeeper.

1883—E. W. Taylor, president; William Williams, vice president; Robert Brewster, secretary and treasurer; John Wagner, foreman; Frank Medlenka, first assistant; Joseph Lewis, second assistant.



STONEWALL'S UNIFORM IN 1875.

M. P. Geiselman and Ed Schultz in uniform of Stonewall No. 3 in 1875—red flannel shirt and black doeskin trousers.

1884-85—E. W. Taylor, president; William Williams, vice president; Robert Brewster, secretary; Charles Wichman, foreman; John Wagner, first assistant; Louis Ollre, second assistant.

1886-87—E. C. Crawford, president; William Williams, vice president; I. Klopman, secretary; Robert Brewster, treasurer; J. J. Ollre, foreman; J. P. Arto, first assistant; Tom Bond, second assistant; H. L. Crutcher, driver.

1888-89—E. C. Crawford, president; George Funk, vice president; E. W. Sewall, treasurer; Henry Stamm, secretary; J. P. Arto, foreman; Tony Readler, first assistant; Joe Cooper, second assistant.

1890-91—Ernest Necco, president; C. M. McNeill, vice president; Robert Brewster, treasurer; Henry Stamm, secretary; J. P. Arto, foreman; Alex Necco, first assistant; H. T. Levy, second assistant; J. J. Ollre, driver.

1892-93—The company had increased its membership to 95. Ernest Necco, president; A. Ambler, vice president; Robert Brewster, treasurer; Henry Stamm, secretary; J. P. Arto, foreman; H. Levy, first assistant; Henry Damuth, second assistant; Frank Hayes, driver.

1894-95—In two years the membership had dropped to 75, showing how it fluctuated under the system of fines for non-attendance upon fires and failure to answer roll call afterward. No. 1 had its fine as high as \$2.50. Ernest Necco, president; Henry Stamm, treasurer; M. Thompson, secretary; Henry Damuth, foreman; N. Lindsey, first assistant; Frank Horsford, second assistant; Henry Wooley, driver.

## LIBERTY No. 2.

Organized in 1852, its first membership being composed of such staunch citizens as William M. Rice, C. W. Buckley, F. R. Lubbock, Theo. U. Lubbock, J. D. Cocke, I. N. Moreland, Pat Dowling, Fritz Mohl, Thomas Whitmarsh, C. W. Hurd, W. D. Smith, Daniel G. Wheeler, T. D. Dalzell, B. F. Tankersley, Billy Fulton, Geo. W. Shelly, John Rudersdorf, G. W. Capron, A. W. Jordan, W. H. King, E. W. Cave, W. A. Van Alstyne, T. J. H. Anderson, J. D. Waters, P. Rey-



**EX-CHIEF TOM O'LEARY.**

Just plain Tom O'Leary is the only kindly name to kindle fond recollections of a man who once held the admiration of Houstonians. Tom O'Leary was one chieftain who went into all hearts, and those hearts bled when his life went out by an explosion which occurred while he was directing the Department at a fire. Mr. O'Leary was foreman of Stonewall No. 3, and was elected chief from that company. Later he was police chief for two years. Thomas Andrew O'Leary was injured on November 22, and died December 24, 1908.

naud, W. D. Robinson, Henry Sampson, Mort Massey, Fred Stanley, Fred A. Rice, Henry C. Thompson, R. B. Baer, Ed H. Wilson, George R. Bringhurst, Henry M. Curtin, Bob McLin, A. M. Gentry, W. D. Cleveland, A. Cramer, C. Lombardi and A. L. Steele.

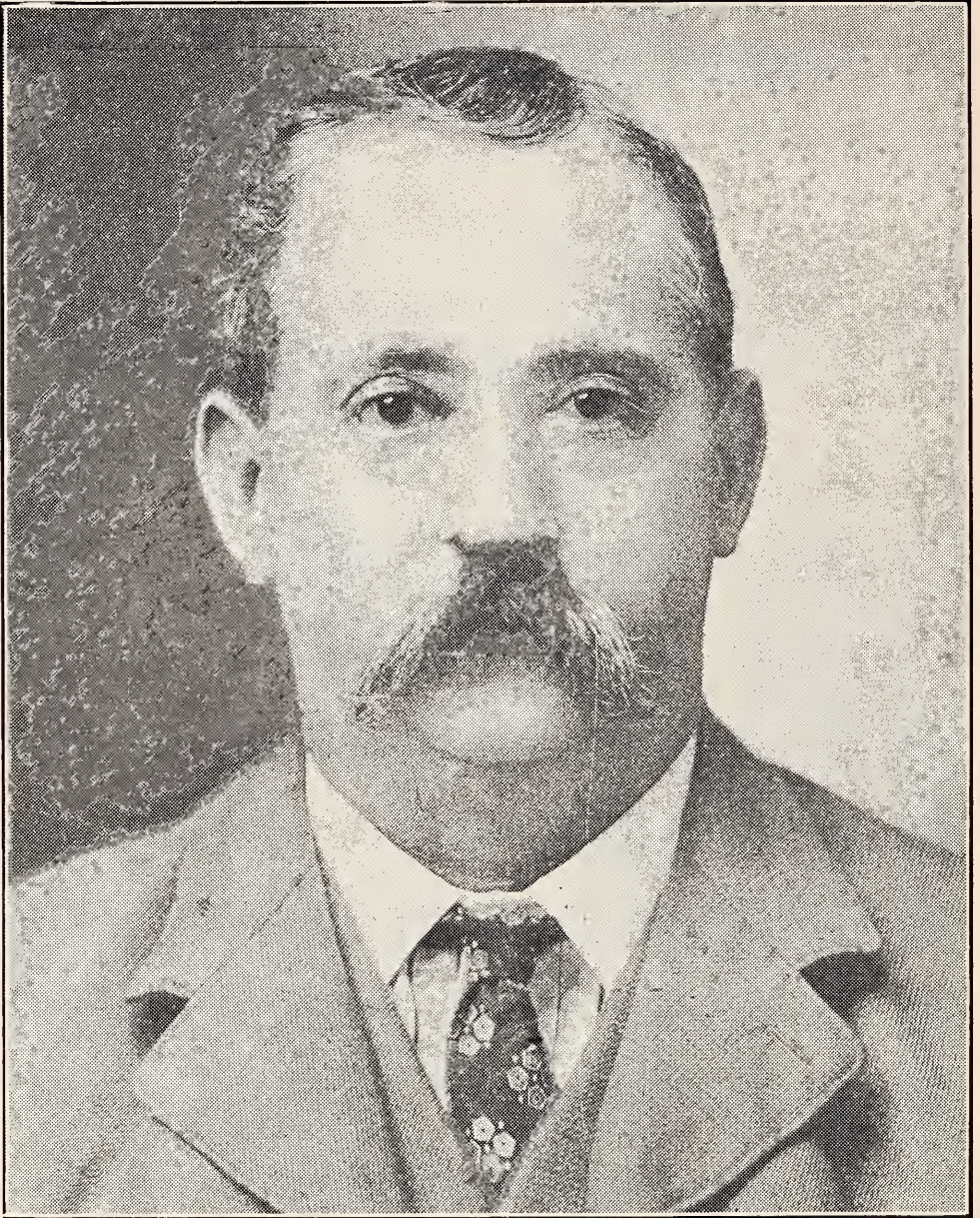
The company first procured a hand pump engine of the Hunnelman make, and in 1866 secured a steamer.

There are very few of this company's members living, and none of the originals. Of those known to be surviving are Col. R. B. Baer, Capt. E. H. Wilson, Geo. R. Bringhurst, H. M. Curtin, Henry C. Thompson and E. A. Bolmes.

The organization shows no record of existence after 1890. The old steamer that had been in service so long was sold for junk after being exposed to the weather for several years.

No. 2's station at first was on Franklin street, between Travis and Milam; then on the corner of Fannin and Franklin (old postoffice site); then at a point on San Jacinto (near the new postoffice), and finally was run into the rear yard of George H. Bringhurst's home on Congress street, an outcast, with no friends, but with a record that will never perish. This good old engine was never known to shirk duty in good or bad weather, by day or night, in season or out, and when on parade was with beauteous and bright appearance, as if in mute appreciation of the admiration the populace held for it. Even when the pumps had become worn to almost uselessness, the valves leaky and the boiler almost as thin as eggshell, its lights burned at night as symbols of readiness, and its old engineer (Mr. Barker) dozed in his chair, but with keen hearing, awaiting a dread alarm that hope bid not sound. As the old boys one by one answered the last summons, no new ones were there to take their places, and Liberty No. 2 finally died of debility in 1890.

With the reorganization of the Department in 1874, Liberty was represented by her delegates, and spent her best endeavor at all times for a successful and harmonious band of volunteers. She furnished the first chief to the Department, in 1859-61, in the person of James A. Cushman, who



**M. P. GEISELMAN.**

Pierce Geiselman, for many years an active member and official of Stonewall No. 3, is one of the Old Guard, hale and hearty, and a live wire of Houston's business element. Vice-President and Treasurer of the Joseph F. Meyer Company and Vice-President of the Houston National Exchange Bank. Probably the only living news "butcher" who traveled out of Houston during the war, selling papers on the trains of the B. B., B. & C. railroad to Alleyton and on the H. & T. C. when that line only extended to Millican, and also on the old J. H. Whitelaw passenger steamer between Houston and Galveston.

was pressed into Confederate munitions manufacture and relinquished the fire service. Mr. Cushman died in 1907, at the ripe age of 82 years.

The early records of Liberty No. 2 are lost to posterity, but the official data from 1875, following, is trustworthy:

1875-9—William D. Cleveland, president; A. Cramer, vice president; William Schmidt, secretary; C. Lombardi, treasurer; Henry A. Ohlin, foreman; James McLin, first assistant; John Achenbach, second assistant.

1880-81—William D. Cleveland, president; R. W. McLin, vice president; H. M. Curtin, secretary; M. Rosenfield, treasurer; James McLin, foreman; Max Roy, first assistant; C. W. Hurd, second assistant.

1882-83—W. D. Cleveland, president; John Mellinger, vice president; H. E. Reimann, secretary; M. Rosenfield, treasurer; Martin Curtin, foreman; Max Roy, first assistant; Jules Danielsen, second assistant; John Kubbos, steward.

1884-85—W. D. Cleveland, president; Charles Rugers, vice president; H. E. Reimann, secretary; M. Rosenfield, treasurer; Martin Curtin, foreman; Dan Kattache, first assistant; Max Roy, second assistant.

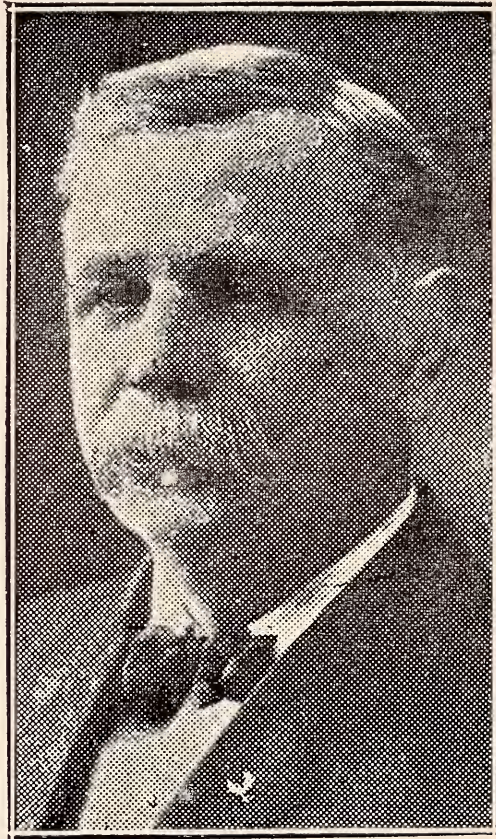
1886-87—W. D. Cleveland, president; C. W. Rugers, vice president; H. E. Reimann, secretary; M. Rosenfield, treasurer; Martin Curtin, foreman; Dan Kattache, first assistant; Max Roy, second assistant; John Kubbos, steward.

1888-89—W. D. Cleveland, president; Henry Scherffius, vice president; H. M. Curtin, secretary; Martin Curtin, foreman; J. A. Danielson, first assistant; C. W. Hurd, second assistant.

In 1890 the final election of officers took place, and during the year the company passed out of commission.

### STONEWALL No. 3.

Organized May 16, 1867; chartered October 12, 1870. In the late '60s urgent need for additional fire fighting force prompted the creation of Stonewall No. 3, and the Department never had a more faithful and earnest contingent than



HUGH HAMILTON.

Hugh Hamilton is a master mechanic and understands the intricate workings of practically all machinery. He is among the first artificial ice manufacturers in Texas, with a factory where the present water works stands. Just an ordinary man apparently, friendly and pleasant in his demeanor, in many ways he is a great man. He is president and all-round general manager of the Magnolia Brewing Association and one of the leading business men of the State; is as active today in the conduct of his company's affairs as he was in his younger days while a member of Stonewall No. 3, when he chased to fires with the balance of the boys. Hugh Hamilton is strictly a self-made man, plain and unassuming, and to know him is to esteem him.

this band of sturdy men brought together under stress of circumstances that called for bravery and self-sacrifice. That Stonewall's boys were equal to the demand for their organization was demonstrated early, and they at once ingratiated themselves into popular favor with a hand pump engine presented to them by John Kennedy, a wealthy mill owner of the Second ward. This engine was used until the advent of No. 6 in 1873, when, through efforts of J. D. McNally and Charlie Cooper, the citizens subscribed liberally to a fund for the purchase of a large size Bolton engine. This engine was a splendid piece of apparatus, and did excellent work until 1879, when it was sold to the Beaumont department. At this time Liberty No. 2's steamer was out of commission, but with a hose carriage and hose intact. Stonewall had been left with one horse when its engine was taken over by Mechanic No. 6. Dave McNally was secretary of the company and active manager, and by shrewd methods got hold of No. 2's hose reel, which afterwards proved effective when water instead of sand and mud was furnished through the mains of the water works system.

No. 3's first station was on Travis street, about where the entrance to the Rice Hotel Annex now is; later, it was located in its own brick building on Smith street, just off Preston, and still later on Preston between Smith and Louisiana.

Stonewall's service has been rewarded on several occasions by gifts of money and other valuable donations. A most appreciated gift was a silk banner presented by J. T. Mason to the company for heroic work at a fire at his place of business, corner Franklin and Main, in 1880. This banner was 4x6 feet in size, made of heavy blue silk with gold braid accessories. In gold letters were the words "Stonewall No. 3, 1868," and the motto of the company, "Trust in Us."

At the close of the volunteer period the company had a Preston hose carriage, two horses and 1,200 feet of rubber and cotton hose.

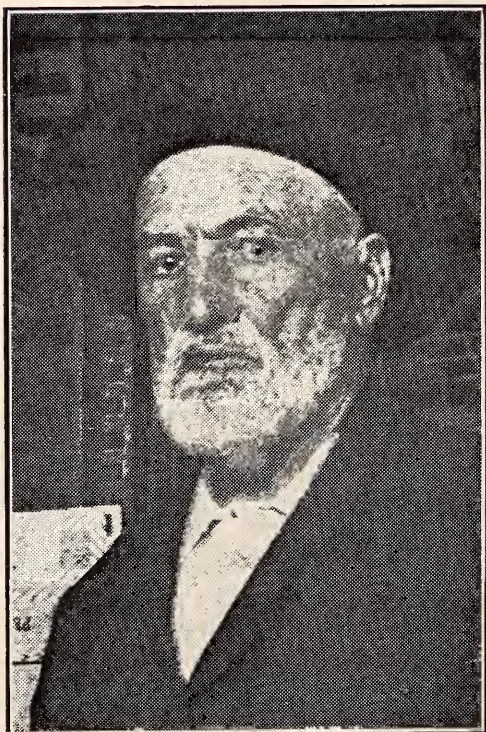
**JOE LEE.**

Joe Lee did valiant service as a volunteer. For two years he was nozzleman for Stonewall No. 3 and for three years was second assistant foreman of his company. He figured in the Bill Perry episode and today bears the scar of attack where he tried to put out a fire near Mr. Perry's handsome home, back in the '80s. Mr. Lee is shipping clerk for C. L. & Theo Bering.

**WILLIAM WILLIAMS.**

"Bill" Williams was a grand old chieftain and is remembered as one of the hard workers in the Volunteer Department.

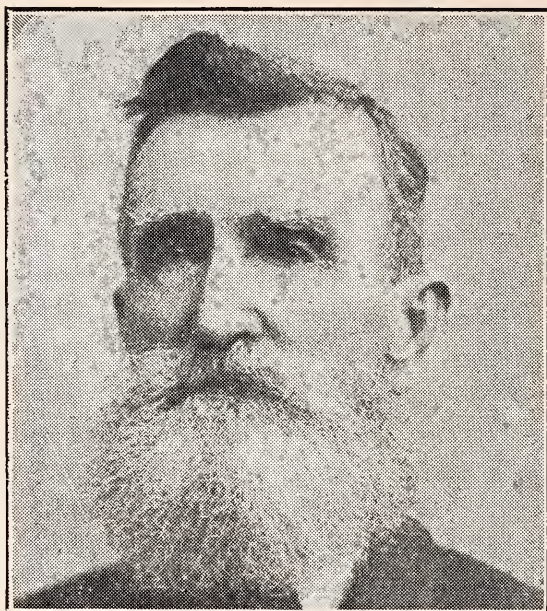
Twice he served as chief engineer, the first time when the Department was reorganized in 1874 and placed upon a solid and substantial basis. Mr. Williams died several years ago.



Early records of the company are not obtainable, but when a call was made for reorganization in 1874, three delegates were at the meeting to represent No. 3 and if possible adopt by-laws that would keep the Department intact, prevent friction among the companies, and perfect a system of fighting fires commensurate with the growing needs of the city. This company had never been a disturbing factor in the combination of a Central Department. At one time, however, Stonewall rose in its dignity and asserted a right it possessed, but yielded to the majority vote in the central body. Reference is made to the \$500 which Frank Dunn agreed to give the company that saved his building when the Sam Roos fire occurred. Stonewall's stream accomplished the feat, and Mr. Dunn handed Chief Parker a check for the amount. Mr. Parker turned the check over to the first meeting of the Department. Stonewall claimed the amount as its own individually. Much discord was created and many personal difficulties took place concerning it. Finally a majority decided that the amount should go to the monument fund. Following this action, Stonewall refused to participate in celebration of Firemen's Day on April 21st, but instead held a celebration of its own, parading in the afternoon with a brass band and marching out to Merkel's Grove to take part in the festivities. The company was uniformed in gray plug hats and linen crash suits, each carrying a colored umbrella. They presented a most striking and pleasing picture as they marched through the big gate at the grove. Mechanic No. 6 considered the action of No. 3 as an affront to the entire Department, and at once mustered its force for a fight to put the intruders outside the gate. For a while it seemed as if the celebration would be turned into a bloody combat, but wiser heads induced the obstreperously inclined to forget their differences and finish the day in pleasant mood. No. 3's boys never looked to better advantage, and soon they were at home in full enjoyment of the occasion. Each company in the Department had its lady admirers, and late in the afternoon, when the dance program started, the Stonewalls and Sixes kept as far apart as possible, neither side asking

**JONATHAN HARRIS.**

A member of old Liberty No. 2 and alert to every active duty as a citizen was Jonathan Harris, who landed in Houston in 1859 and passed through the trying times intervening to the period when Houston assumed the proportions of a city. Mr. Harris constructed Harrisburg road and supervised the building of the Houston city street railway in 1874, and the Bayou City street railway in 1889. He was street superintendent of Houston for years and discovered the water-bearing strata that furnishes the city with its present water supply. He died a few years ago, a highly respected citizen, at the age of about 90 years.

**JEROME B. COCHRAN.**

A live wire in Houston's business element is Jerome B. Cochran, head of the Cochran Insurance Agency, organized in 1865. Mr. Cochran was an officer in old "Rough and Ready," Mechanic No. 6, and served his company and community truly and well. He contributed of his time, energy and money to sustain the Volunteer Department and help it on to its present state of efficiency.

a lady of the other to share a dance with him. To the lady friends of both companies great credit is due for averting a clash between the rival factions in the Department on this occasion.

Since 1874 the officers of the company have been :

1874-79—Joseph Edmonds, president; Joseph J. Pastoriza, vice president; Dave McNally, secretary; Simon Roos, treasurer; Alex Pastoriza, foreman; Nelson Clemow, first assistant; Jacob Edmonds, second assistant.

1880-81—Joseph Edmonds, president; A. Stude, vice president; James H. Adair, secretary; Simon Roos, treasurer; Joseph F. Meyer, foreman; A. Pastoriza, first assistant; J. Tuffly, second assistant.

1882-83—Joseph Edmonds, president; Chas. Grumbach, vice president; C. M. Dooley, secretary; Simon Roos, treasurer; J. D. McNally, foreman; Jake Keller, first assistant; J. P. Butler, second assistant; J. L. Brown, housekeeper.

1884-85—Joseph Edmonds, president; J. J. Clede, vice president; J. M. Verges, secretary; Simon Roos, treasurer; Jake Keller, foreman; W. F. Meyer, first assistant; Joe Lee, second assistant.

1886-88—Joseph Edmonds, president; Chas. C. Lott, vice president; John M. Verges, secretary; Wm. Angerhoefer, treasurer; Tom F. Ravell, foreman; B. C. Moffat, first assistant; Louis Michaux, second assistant; Jeff Long, driver.

1889-90—J. D. McNally, president; Chas. C. Lott, vice president; Robert Angerhoefer, secretary; William Angerhoefer, treasurer; S. Rosenberg, foreman; H. Goebel, first assistant; H. Koenig, second assistant; J. L. Brown, driver.

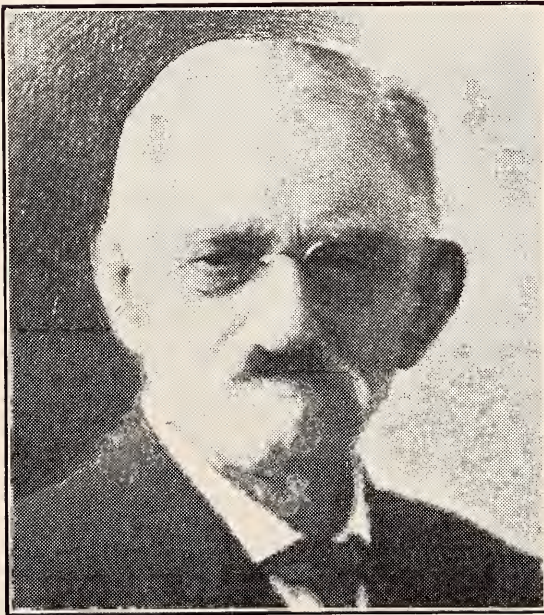
1891-92—Tom Ravell, president; Chas. C. Lott, vice president; Otto Preuss, secretary; Robert Angerhoefer, treasurer; Tom O'Leary, foreman; Louis Michaux, first assistant; Gus Warneke, second assistant; J. L. Brown, driver.

1892-93—S. Rosenberg, president; Walter Smith, vice president; Tom Ravell, secretary; Alex Hail, treasurer; Tom O'Leary, foreman; Herman Dissen, first assistant; Jules Dejarles, second assistant; John Boyd, driver.

1894-95—Sam H. Brashear, president; Sam Krum, vice

**GEORGE R. BRINGHURST.**

Few of Liberty No. 2's members survive to recount the thrilling days of the Volunteer Fire Department. George R. Bringhurst is of an old and influential Houston family, has served in various capacities as a city official, and enjoys the esteem and confidence of his fellows. Liberty No. 2 was composed mainly of merchants and professional men, and Mr. Bringhurst was the trusted and efficient secretary of the organization for many years.

**SIMON ROOS.**

Among the old-time citizens who gave his time and money to sustain the Volunteer Fire Department was Simon Roos, a member and long-time officer of Stonewall No. 3. The exchequer of the company was in his charge many years, and for several terms he was second assistant foreman. Mr. Roos during his life was in business and held the respect and esteem of his fellow citizens. The business he so well established in 1867 is today conducted by his six sons. The memory of Simon Roos fondly dwells with many old Houstonians.

president; S. Rosenberg, secretary; L. N. Wright, treasurer; Tom O'Leary, foreman; Albert Roper, first assistant; Gus Railey, Jr., second assistant; H. Dissen, driver.

#### LEE No. 4.

This was a Second ward company of juniors; had a hand engine, but never belonged to the Department. Active during its brief career. It is probable this company was organized about 1872, with a hope of long and useful service and its number was not molested by adult companies.

#### COYLE No. 4.

W. H. Coyle was a popular chief engineer, and the boys were not slow to recognize his worth as a fire fighter. They secured a small hand engine and named their company Coyle No. 4, in honor of the chief, about 1883. The little fellows paraded on one occasion with the Department and went out of service.

#### JEFF DAVIS No. 4.

Early in 1874 Henry Harris and associates organized to use a hand engine which had come into their possession. The apparatus was merely a force pump set upon a home-made body, but the boys comprising the company esteemed it very much, and during the two years of its existence they paraded twice with the regular Department, in April 21st celebrations, uniformed in red shirts, black trousers and straw hats.

#### JONES No. 4.

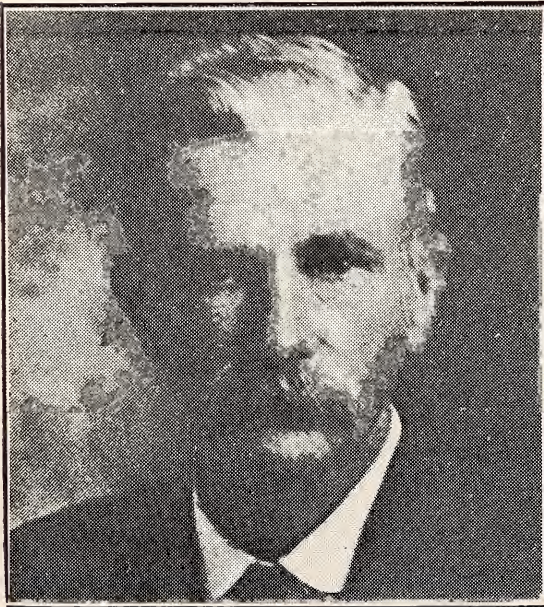
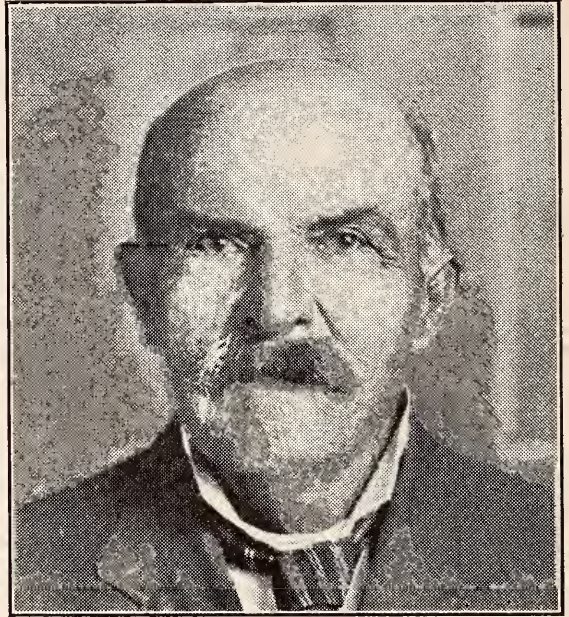
Organized by Chief E. R. Parker in the Fifth ward on July 10, 1888, with a rebuilt hand-pump engine, and stationed near Temby's mill. Charles Kinzbach, president; C. W. Campbell, vice-president; J. W. Temby, secretary; M. Mihill, treasurer; F. N. Sloan, foreman; Barney Owens, first assistant; Bud Williams, second assistant.

#### BROOKS No. 5.

Brooks No. 5 was named in honor of A. M. Brooks, an old citizen of the Fifth ward in the '70s. The company was organized September 24, 1874.

**EDWARD A. BOLMES.**

Edward Alan Bolmes has passed the three score and ten allotment on life's highway, but is still hale and hearty and retains remarkable memory of the past. He is probably the only survivor of old Liberty No. 2 of the 1866 period. Mr. Bolmes was secretary of the company when the Department reorganized for service after the war, and has experienced many thrilling occurrences during his long terms as a Confederate soldier and volunteer fireman.

**JOHN G. GIESBERG.**

One of the prize winners of Mechanic No. 6 at Waco in 1877 and at Houston in 1878, his membership dating from the early days of the company's existence. He was an almost perpetual delegate to the central body and served with honor and distinction as an officer and fire fighter. He has refused high office in the Volunteer Department, preferring to remain a private in the ranks and serve his company. Mr. Giesberg is a marble setter and lives at No. 1704 Jackson street.

No. 5's station was at Liberty and McKee streets, and the membership numbered 35.

So enthusiastic were the boys to do service that they first equipped their station with jugs of chemicals, and kept a small wagonload of these for immediate use. But soon a hose reel was furnished them. A year later they were provided with the first chemical engine used in the city. This engine was a novelty and at once became known as the "soda fountain." In after years the city bought two steamers, giving one to the Brooks company, the other to Protection.

Brooks No. 5 took its position in the Department and afforded much needed relief to the meager complement of fire extinguishers, the number and efficiency of which were not in keeping with the growth of building activities and increase of population, and a consequently greater fire risk.

As in the case of Mechanic No. 6, the elder and some wealthy citizens of the ward exhibited pride in the new company and joined as honoraries, encouraging the young element in every possible manner.

J. C. Thomas was president of the company for several years; Sam Mateer, secretary and treasurer; Zach Hogan, foreman; William Alexander, first assistant; Phil C. Gagne, second assistant.

The steamer purchased by the city on credit and presented to the company about two years previously was taken from them by attachment proceedings during 1879. This action caused them to remain in a quiescent state until they disbanded a few years later, when they decided it was useless to longer remain organized with no prospect of obtaining another engine. On parade occasions, however, the Brooks boys were in line all dolled up, but with no apparatus, until 1883.

In 1880 William Alexander was elected president; John A. Kirlicks, secretary and treasurer; Phil C. Gagne, foreman; R. Schiel, first assistant; Ed Walters, second assistant.

1882-83—William Alexander, president; Ed Walters, vice president; John Kirlicks, secretary and treasurer; James



**THOS. J. DE YOUNG.**

Scenic painter by trade and for 30 years was employed by the Southern Pacific Railroad; member of the county democratic executive committee and a leader in political matters. Was one of the organizers of Mechanic No. 6 and remained in the volunteer service 22 years; held offices in his company and was one of the prize runners at Waco and Houston. In the individual contests at sprinting at the Waco meet Mr. De Young was the fastest man in the State at from a quarter to a mile. He has the repute of having ridden bareback and without bridle the horse that pulled Mechanic No. 6 to the big market house fire in 1876, being the first engine at the scene and getting first water on the flames. He and F. Cam Fourmy, nozzlemen, were trapped in the upper stories and climbed down the lightning rod in making their escape.

Snowball, foreman; John T. Morriss, first assistant; Richard Schiel, second assistant.

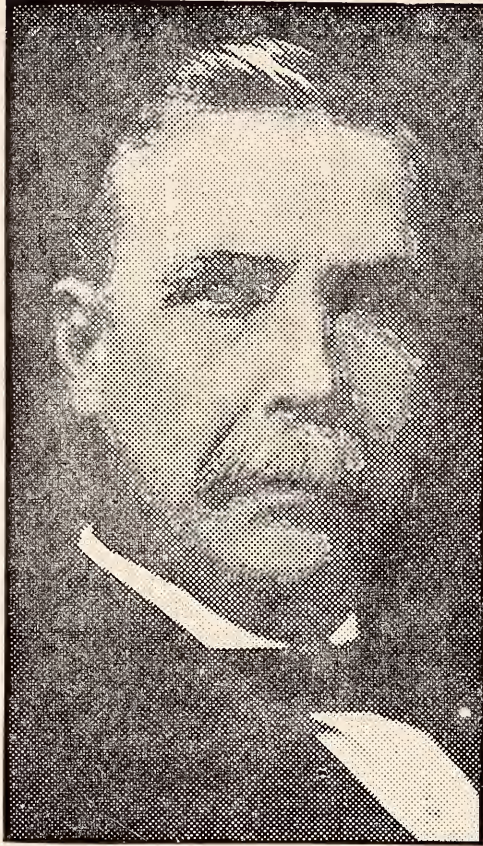
Nearly all the original members of the company are now deceased.

A story is told of how this company's fifth class steamer, at one of the State meets, secured first water over a first class steamer belonging to the Sherman Department. The conditions of the contest were that each steamer should raise steam and force water through two lengths of hose. Will Toole and John Thomas, Jr., of the Brooks company, and Tom DeYoung, Theo. Pereira, Fred Lugenbuhl, Walter Goggan and Ed Allen of Mechanic No. 6, with Frank McNally as engineer, manned the Brooks engine. Absolutely fearless of consequences, they packed the fire box with white pine, hay and fat pine shavings, and for good measure added a gallon of kerosene to the fuel. While waiting for the signal to apply the match a hat was tossed over the steam gauge. No specification had been made as to the quantity of water each boiler should contain, and there is no record of how much they had, but it is said that while the Sherman boys were watching for their water to boil the Houston boys gave a water display that pleased the spectators. When the Sherman engine got into action, however, its work was superb and its stream outdistanced that of the Houston company.

#### MECHANIC No. 6.

This company was organized October 28, 1873, at the junction of Washington and Preston streets, in the Fourth ward, North (a geographical designation at that time of the Fourth ward lying north of Buffalo Bayou), with 45 members. Col. A. B. Brown, a wealthy resident of that section of the city, was sponsor for the undertaking, and with his backing the new company went to the front at once as an important adjunct to the small Department which had become disorganized and was battling for individual existence.

John H. B. House, an ambitious young man and son of Col. T. W. House, an old and wealthy citizen, also took a



**JONAS SHEARN RICE.**

Captain Jo S. Rice is today president of the Big Union National Bank. In the yesterdays he was a volunteer fireman and militiaman. A little farther back he was ready at any time to hike with a crowd of boys to the nearest swimming hole or play a scrub game of baseball. He was admired by his boy companions then. Today he is admired by all classes of good citizens for the many admirable qualities he possesses in his manhood. There was never any false pride in the Rice family, and it will always be an inseparable part of Houston history.

selfish interest in this company and gave of his time and means to sustain the enthusiasm of the young firemen. While not a resident of the ward, and practically ineligible for active membership, he was elected by acclamation an honorary life member of the company.

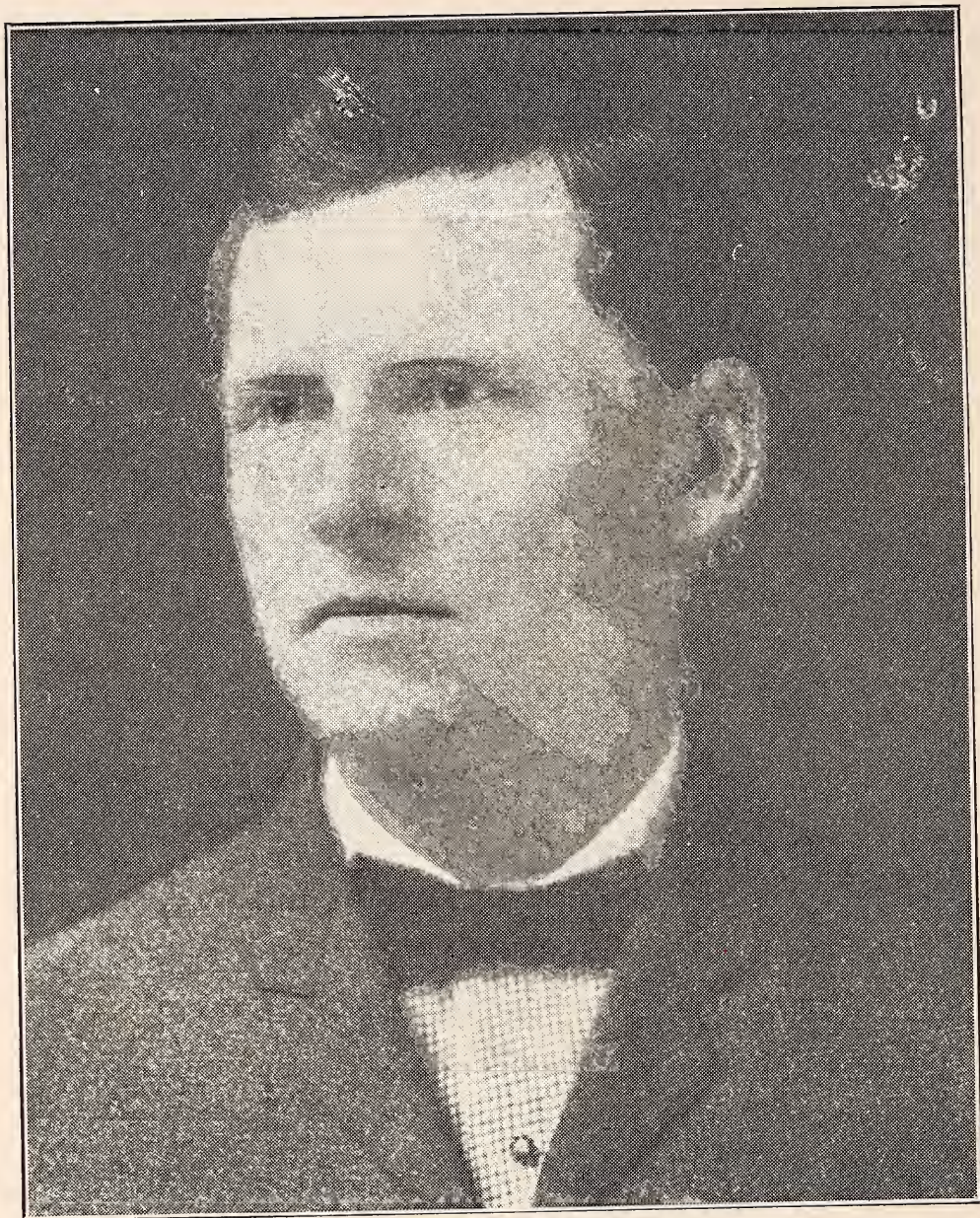
Messrs. Joe Pereira, James Terry, N. Randolph and other old citizens gave full encouragement and assistance to the young Mechanics, and for a long time their alertness and daring easily made them the pride of the city. The ladies, too, added in no small measure to the growing success of the company by affording social functions in their honor. These were the mothers, wives and sweethearts of the members, and recognition of their efforts was ever reflected in return courtesies, manly bearing and splendid deportment while on dress parade or in competitive endeavor for honors.

The by-laws were original, distinctive and characteristic of the times and local conditions. While it was common in those days for boys in the advanced teens in age to go barefoot, there was express stipulation that all applicants for membership must wear shoes; and a prospective member must have been a mechanic or apprentice at some trade.

In private life no better citizens could be found, but an alarm of fire or a blaze leaping skyward seemed to demonize and enkindle within them a dare-devil spirit that won more admiration than criticism.

The first engine the company had was the hand pumper of Stonewall No. 3, for which the Sixes gave \$150. This engine in the latter part of 1878 was sold to a junior company named Rescue No. 7. The new side-bar Bolton engine was received in 1878, and the last service the old engine was used for was in the record run of 250 yards, which has never been equaled, at the State Fair Grounds, in October, 1878.

For twenty years Mechanic No. 6 was in the volunteer service and the engine house had three locations—the first on the Preston street side of Stude Point, the second on the Washington street side of the same building, and lastly into their own home at No. 1106 Washington street.



**GUS A. BRANDT.**

A familiar figure among the early fire fighters was Gus A. Brandt of Hook and Ladder No. 1. For many years he was secretary of the company and his complete records are today intact and evidence the times of adversity and danger every citizen gladly gave to his community. His was a labor of love and duty. There were no emoluments attached to his service, but instead, aside from his personal energy as an active member, he willingly contributed his monthly stipend to sustain his company before Houston was able to pay for the service.

Mr. Brandt was born in La Grange, Texas, and is at present a director of the James Bute Company.

"Rough and Ready" was the company's motto.

Theo. J. Pereira was the first foreman, serving two years. J. D. McNally was the first president, and Jeff Rookh the first secretary.

At the election of officers early in 1876 Alex Martin was made foreman; Chris Carstens, first assistant; John D. Anderson, second assistant; Wm. Colby, president; A. B. Brown, vice president; H. O. Leeson, secretary; Fred Lugenhuhl, treasurer. These officers served until 1878.

1878-79—Tom Martin, foreman; John Anderson, first assistant; John R. Riordan, second assistant; H. O. Leeson, secretary; Fred Lugenhuhl, treasurer; A. B. Brown, president.

During the year 1880 the company was presented a handsome and spirited pair of bay horses by Col. A. B. Brown and Johnny House. B. A. Riesner, president; Robert Beyers, vice president; E. H. Vasmer, secretary and treasurer; George Underwood, foreman; John R. Riordan, first assistant; John D. Anderson, second assistant; Walter Goggan, driver.

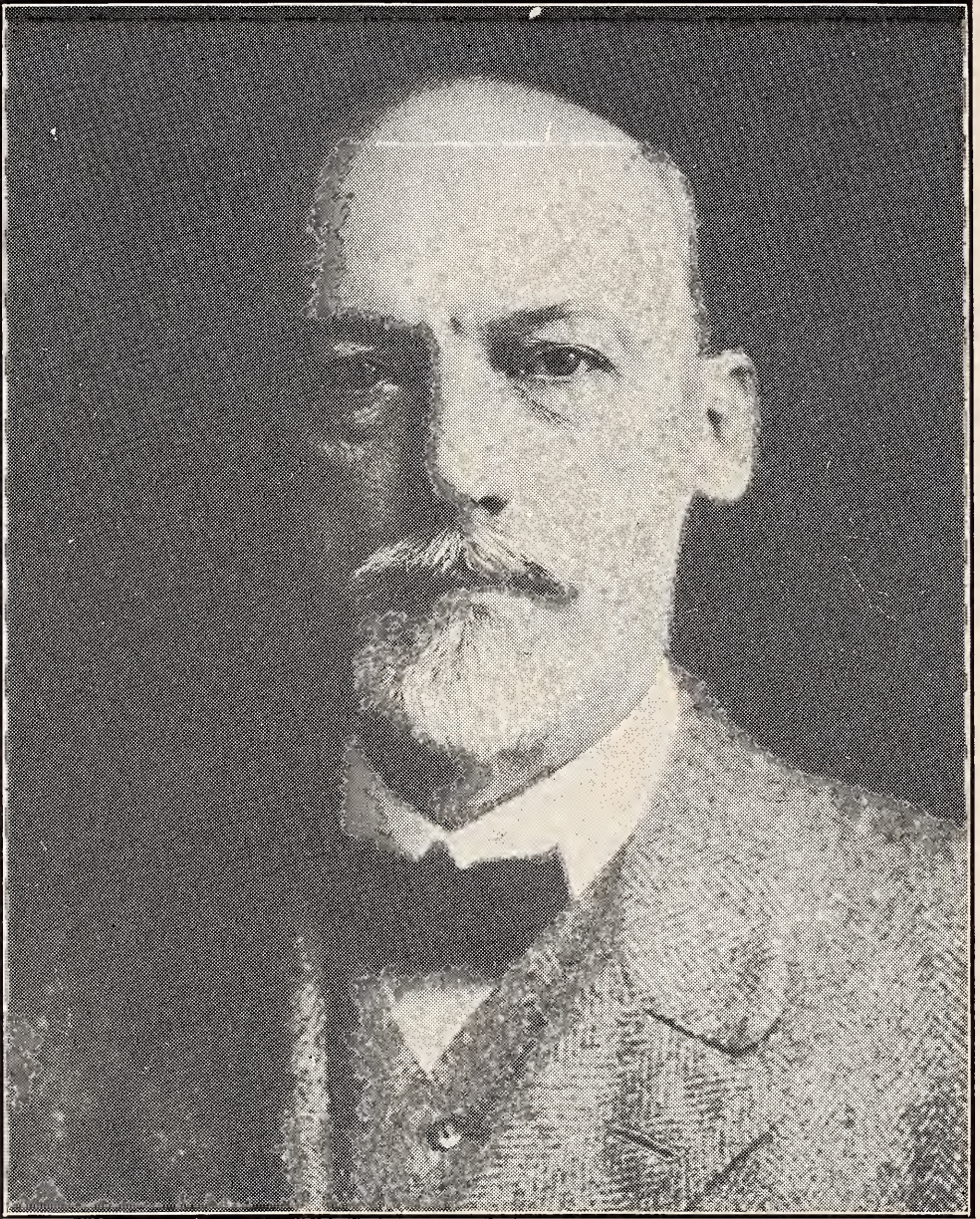
1882-83—B. A. Riesner, president; A. B. Brown, vice president; W. J. Coulter, secretary and treasurer; John Giesberg, foreman; James Moriarty, first assistant; Harry B. Davis, second assistant.

1884-85—J. G. Giesberg, president; A. B. Brown, vice president; Theo. J. Pereira, secretary and treasurer; Geo. P. Brown, foreman; Alex Brown, first assistant; William DeYoung, second assistant.

1886-87—George P. Brown, president; Ben Wolf, vice president; George Underwood, secretary; Harry B. Davis, treasurer; Theo. J. Pereira, foreman; Wm. DeYoung, first assistant; Chas. F. Superville, second assistant.

1888—Frank Cannon, president; F. Platt, vice president; W. J. Coulter, secretary; H. B. Davis, treasurer; Tom Martin, foreman; Chas. Superville, first assistant; G. Bilby, second assistant.

1889-90—E. J. Walters, president; Wm. Holzinger, vice president; J. B. Cochran, secretary; B. A. Riesner, treasurer; Tom Martin, foreman; Jasper Bilby, first assistant; Ferdinand Ries, second assistant; Al Bilby, driver.



**HARVEY T. D. WILSON.**

Harvey T. D. Wilson's ancestors were among the early settlers of Houston. His grandfather and father have conspicuous and worthy records in Texas history, their wisdom and counsel always being for the people, against the influences of graft and corruption. Harvey Wilson is a progressive and his continued thought and effort is to build Houston still greater through agricultural development, drainage, good roads and rural advancement. He is president of several land companies in this section of Texas. In the volunteer days he was a member of Hook and Ladder No. 1, and for a time was assistant chief of the Department. He presented Mechanic 6 with the first horse the company owned.

1891-92—E. J. Walters, president; Chas. Superville, vice president; A. J. Merkent, secretary; B. A. Riesner, treasurer; Henry Jurgens, foreman; Ferd Reis, first assistant; Otto Bockmeyer, second assistant; Charles Richart, driver.

1892-93—Adam Clay, president; Louie Lude, vice president; A. J. Merkent, secretary; B. A. Riesner, treasurer; Henry Jurgens, foreman; H. J. Hindman, first assistant; C. G. Richart, second assistant; Charles Richart, driver.

1894-95—William Moroney, president; B. G. Rolls, vice president; A. C. Opperman, secretary; F. H. Potthoff, treasurer; Wm. P. Siebert, foreman; Fred Erichson, first assistant; Wm. Ellis, second assistant; Otto Lutz, driver.

### LITTLE SIXES.

Bud Randolph, Matt Forney, Will Colby, Ollie DeYoung and others too young to join Mechanic No. 6 formulated a firemen's force of their own about 1884. They were in the San Jacinto Day parade in 1885 and dropped out of existence in 1886.

### RESCUE No. 7.

This company was ushered into service in 1878, taking the engine of Mechanic No. 6. After a few months, finding expenses much in excess of dues from the members, and receiving no financial encouragement from private sources, the company disbanded, turning the apparatus over to Young America No. 7, another band of youths who had firemanic ambition.

### YOUNG AMERICA No. 7.

This was one of the promising junior companies, organized in the late '70s. The engine was a small hand pumper (taken over from Rescue No. 7) and capable of throwing water 75 feet with the pumps at full stroke. Eddie Fulton was foreman; Burrell Aycock and Howard Sterrett, assistants; John S. Stewart was secretary. After a few months' service the company disbanded, and the apparatus went to another set of young firemen, named Eagle No. 7.

**T. W. HOUSE.**

Postmaster T. W. House of Houston was a volunteer fireman in bygone days. The name of House is inseparably a part of the city's early growth and among the noble pioneers who merit renown for their personal sacrifices for the good of the common weal. Will House was an active member of Protection No. 1. No man is more universally popular than Mr. House, and when he was appointed postmaster at Houston the selection met with popular approval.

**FRANK B. DWYER.**

Eagle No. 7 was composed of a most ambitious bunch of youngsters. They had a little hand-pumper and were never slow in getting to a fire, making a reputation of having to make way for one of the big engines after they had covered a cistern and gotten water. Frank B. Dwyer was one of the officers of this company. He is still a boy a little older grown, in the drug business at No. 1320 Washington avenue.



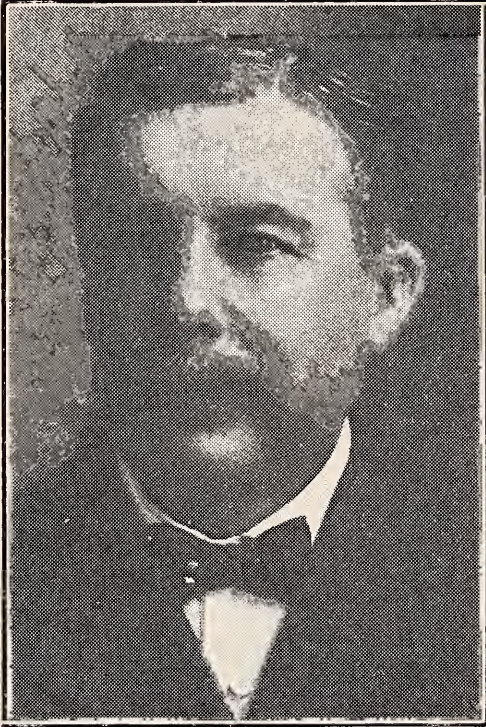
## EAGLE No. 7.

This company succeeded Young America No. 7, with the same apparatus. The association comprised young sons of many of the first families, and while the name of the organization was changed, the membership remained practically the same. E. B. Cushing, Sydney Smith and Frank Sawyer were officers, and Wallace O'Leary was the sponsor for this company and provided quarters for the engine at his home, foot of Congress avenue.

## WASHINGTON No. 8.

This company organized August 4, 1894, and was chartered August 29, of the same year. No company of the Department ever experienced the success and progress during the year of its existence that fell to the lot of Washington No. 8. Without apparent trouble they became equipped with a new Clapp & Jones third-class steamer and hose wagon, four horses, 1,200 feet of rubber hose and a splendid engine house on Crawford street. At the beginning, 94 members were on the rolls, all equipped with a most attractive uniform of white flannel trimmed with black braid. In point of numbers, equipment and general deportment and service Washington No. 8 was probably the banner company of the Department at the close of volunteer service in 1895. During this year Wm. B. Hill was president; Jules Hirsch, vice president; Frank Lumm, first assistant; Allen Paul, second assistant; J. Waddy Tate, secretary; George G. Timmins, treasurer. Among the members were C. C. Beavens, Jr., P. S. Banner, R. E. Craig, C. W. Hurley, S. T. McIlhenny, I. S. Roberts, W. H. Sprong, Frank Tuttle, J. F. Williams, S. D. Arnold, J. R. Waties, Julius Lilienthal, J. A. Hail, A. R. Miller, James J. Hussey, W. J. Kohlhauff, Chris Malavansos, T. G. Beard, Ed J. Heninger, W. D. Mihills, E. A. Rosenfield, H. S. Fox, C. E. Miller, B. Repsdorph, J. J. Ellis, F. E. Russell, Allen Shepherd, John B. Ashe, A. D. Polemanakos, L. Sonnen and J. A. Tempest.

W. W. Thomas was accorded the credit of organizing this company and of securing its splendid equipment.

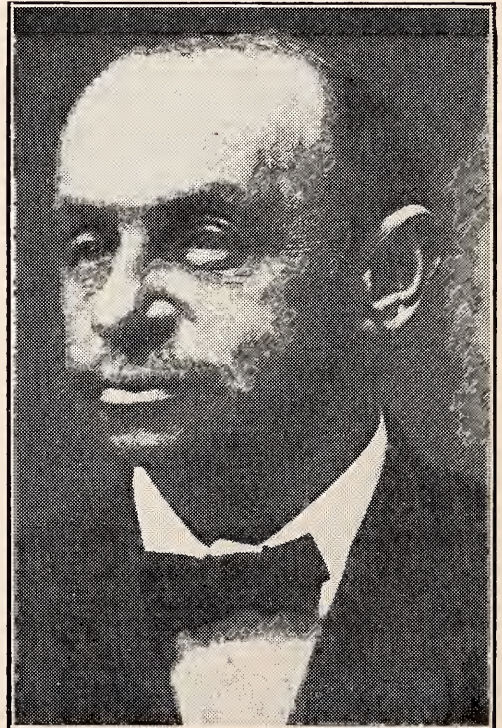
**FREDERICK H. POTTHOFF.**

The subject of this picture was one of the active members and long-time treasurer of old "Rough and Ready" Mechanic No. 6, and has always been active in matters pertaining to Houston's welfare. Fred Potthoff faithfully served his citizenship and will pass down in local history as one of the pioneers who stood by the city in adversity and today is reaping the fruits of well-sown seed. Mr. Potthoff is proprietor of the Union Bottling Works, 1010 McKinney Avenue, and supplies a large portion of South Texas with soft drinks and delicious summer beverages.

Mr. Potthoff was born in Germany in 1856, came to Galveston in 1874, and to Houston in 1881.

**SIMON ROSENBERG.**

In the late '80s, when the Department had about 350 members and Stonewall No. 3 was at the zenith of its glory, Si Rosenberg was the foreman of the company. He held other offices, but as foreman proved himself a real fireman and successful director of men. The boys unhesitatingly obeyed his commands, for his judgment never placed his firemen in grave danger. Mr. Rosenberg is a prosperous merchant at No. 2728 Washington Avenue, and enjoys telling of the days when risking life was a game of play for old and young.



## ALAMO No. 8.

In the early '90s Alamo No. 8 was organized. Young men, headed by Boleyn Lloyd (now county commissioner), conceived the idea of locating a fire engine on San Felipe street, and soon had a roster of splendid youths to man the small engine that had been given them. Already the agitation had begun to surrender the Volunteer Department to the city, and Alamo No. 8 deemed it useless to ask for larger apparatus. In 1892 the company disbanded. While in service they proved themselves good but young material for fire fighting, and were not slow to resort to blows when chided by brother firemen, who sang in chorus these lines when No. 8 was approaching a fire:

Alamo 8, she came too late,  
She bumped her head against the gate;  
She always shirks,  
She never works—  
But wants a pension from the state.

## CURTIN No. 9.

Organized May 1, 1881, with 32 members, at No. 17 Commerce street. Named in honor of Henry M. Curtin, long time member and secretary of Liberty No. 2.

This company came into being two years after completion of the Houston water works system, and its apparatus consisted of a hose reel. Its good work at fires proved it a valuable acquisition to the Department.

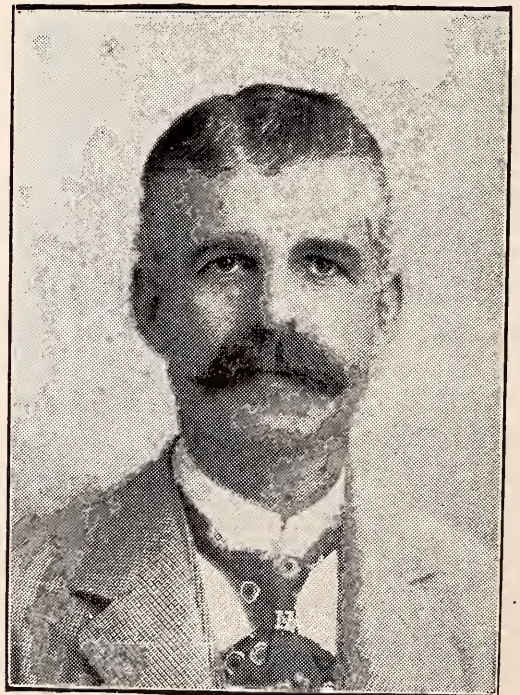
This company was first organized by boys in the Fourth ward, North, the apparatus consisting of a force pump on a home-made pine body, the hose of the  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch rubber variety, and "Soap Box" was the common appellation given it. Ambitious pride directed the larger and older members to higher aspirations, and the hose reel company was formed. After a few years' location on Commerce street the reel was stationed in the Fifth ward, where it could be of better service to that rapidly building portion of the city. Curtin No. 9 had always been a creditable part of the Volunteer Department.

**FRED KERSTENS.**

Hook and Ladder No. 1 furnished much good material and service to the Volunteer Department. Fred Kerstens was for years foreman of the truck company, and while a delegate to the central body was elected first assistant chief under Chief Tom Ravell, serving four years in the volunteers and four years in the paid service. His full term in the Department embraced 14 years.

**ERNEST NECCO.**

For many years the name of Necco was connected with the Volunteer Department. Ernest Necco was a member of Protection No. 1, and is entitled to a place of honor for firemanic service. He held various offices and for five years was his company's president. Mr. Necco is in his 57th year of life, and is proprietor of the Necco Metal Works at No. 311 Caroline Street.



There is no record of transactions of the company in the hands of the small boys, but in 1884-85 Thos. H. Lawrence was foreman; Eugene R. Pereira, first assistant; C. Koch, second assistant; W. A. Evans, driver; S. Bruin, president; F. Mixsel, vice president; J. C. Conner, secretary; A. Weber, treasurer.

1886-87—Thos. H. Lawrence, foreman; William Molkenbur, first assistant; Ed McCormick, second assistant; J. J. Walker, driver.

1888-89—R. M. Floeck, president; Fred Gerdes, vice president; J. H. Peregoy, secretary; A. Weber, treasurer; William Molkenbur, foreman; J. J. Walker, first assistant; George Spencer, second assistant; Jeff Campbell, driver.

1890—Charles Marston, president; Michael Spann, vice president; J. H. Peregoy, secretary and treasurer; P. Hauck, foreman; John Donnelly, first assistant; Thomas Barton, second assistant; Jeff Campbell, driver.

1891—Thomas Barton, president; Michael Spann, vice president; Lee Schwander, secretary; Charles Renne, treasurer; John Donnelly, foreman; Alex Begg, first assistant; William Lyles, second assistant; Jeff Campbell, driver.

1892-93—R. S. Abell, president; C. L. Brown, vice president; Ed Franks, secretary; Charles Mateer, treasurer; John Donnelly, foreman; Lawrence Williams, first assistant; L. Seidenberg, second assistant; Henry Donnelly, driver.

1894-95—Charles Kinzbach, president; Sam Sikes, vice president; Ed Franks, secretary; L. Rosenwald, treasurer; Charles Mateer, foreman; John Greulich, first assistant; Henry Brandt, second assistant; Henry Donnelly, driver.

#### ALERT No. 9.

When Eagle No. 7's brief career had ended, its engine was taken over by a newly organized company of young men, who styled themselves Alert No. 9. The station was on Walker avenue and Crawford street. The volunteer spirit evinced was creditable to these young men, but failing to receive substantial recognition toward getting a larger engine, they disbanded.



CHAS. E. ASHE.

Few men have attained as universal popularity at home as Chas. E. Ashe. Still a young man, after filling both elective and appointive positions of high trust during his ascendancy to the zenith of his brilliant career yet to be achieved, he has presided over the Eleventh District Court of Harris County for several years. Mr. Ashe is unostentatious, unassuming and a man of the common people, yet ranks among the most learned in the legal profession. In bygone days he was a member of Stonewall No. 3.

That a "jonah" was attached to this engine the members had no doubt. It had passed into the hands of three sets of boys under three different names. Consequently when failure seemed to be the inevitable end of the Alerts, those who remained decided to dismember the engine and divide the parts among themselves. John F. Usener got the wheels and pumps, Harry Hughes the body, Eddie McKeever the bell, and minor trappings went to a few others.

### SEIBERT No. 10.

Organized August 24, 1894, and chartered in September of that year. The roster comprised 62 members, all active except one—Hon. John T. Browne, the only honorary member. W. P. Seibert, one of the most indefatigable workers to perfect the Volunteer Department, was the organizer. Billy Seibert's guiding hand was manifest in keeping alive some of the companies struggling for existence as far back as the early '80s on down to the close of the volunteer days.

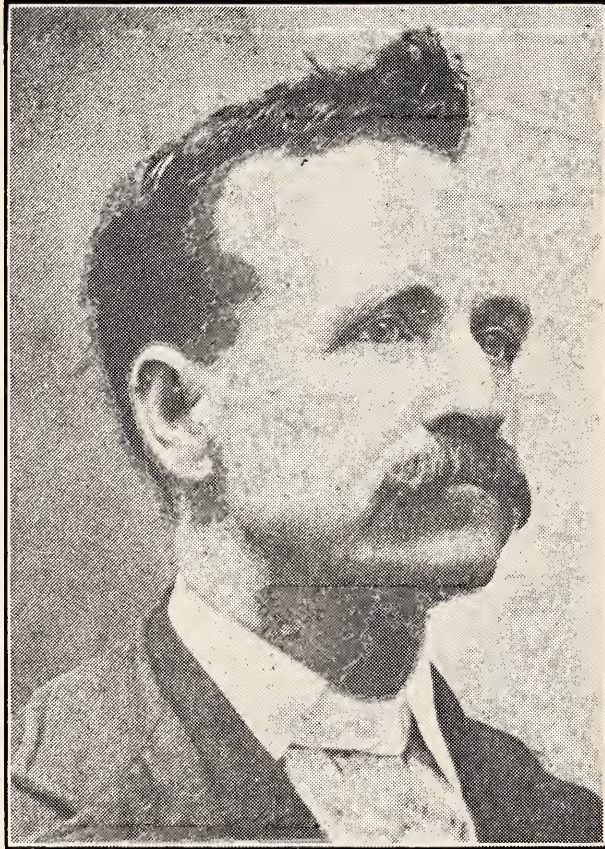
Seibert No. 10's equipment consisted of a hose wagon, 1200 feet of hose and three horses. The company saw about one year of active service, and during that time assisted at 207 fires.

The officers were: John Kennedy, president; W. G. Heinze, vice president; T. G. Hayes, secretary; W. P. Seibert, foreman; S. Proctor, first assistant; L. Hirsch, second assistant; Geo. Voss, steward.

Among the members were Joe Gerson, O. A. Martial, S. Lubbock, Henry Guy, Isidore Fox, J. D. Williams, W. Floeck, S. Alltmont, J. M. Geiselman, A. N. Fitzgerald, Joe Fox, S. Holtkamp, Spence Hutchins, John R. Riordan, C. N. A. DeBajligethy, A. A. Rosenthal, N. Alltmont, A. L. A. DeBajligethy, M. Hart, Sam Alexander, J. Kiesling, Chas. Eisemann, E. Mitner.

### ADAMS No. 10.

In 1887 a company known as Adams No. 10 was organized in the Fifth Ward, in honor of Frank Adams, an old citizen of that section of the city. They had a hose cart



**HENRY A. HARRIS.**

Jeff Davis No. 4 was a hand-pumper and numbered among its members the best boys of the town, one of whom was Henry A. Harris. The engine house was located in the rear of the old Sawyer home on Texas Avenue, near Fannin Street. Mr. Harris was born in Bradford, England, and came to Houston at a tender age. Raised by sanguine and highly progressive parents of old English genealogy, young Harris is of the self-same characteristics and lofty sentiments. He is a big taxpayer, and his contributions to the press are indications of intellectual accomplishments.

and hose and only protected their immediate neighborhood. Joe Schilling was president, Frank Adams, secretary; Dave Fitzgerald (present Water Commissioner), foreman.

### HOOK AND LADDER No. 1.

Organized April 17, 1858; chartered December 31, 1858; rechartered August 13, 1870. Wealthiest company in the Department and with the most rigid set of by-laws. An old record recites as members George A. Gibbons, A. Levy, James B. Cato, Taylor McRae, E. L. Bremond, Pat E. Dowling, Chas. S. Marston, Henry P. Roberts, J. D. Johnson, L. F. DeLesdernier, Chris C. Beavens, Robert Cotter, Joseph M. Tryon, Jules Albert, Will Lambert, Geo. W. Gazley, Robt. W. Shaw, O. L. Cochran, Joe C. Baldwin, C. H. Darling, Jesse Wagner, Frank Bailey. The clause in the company's by-laws that determined its membership declared that none but gentlemen of good character and standing should be received, and every applicant must have had at least three members endorse his application. After an application was received a committee other than his recommenders was appointed to investigate the moral standing of the applicant, and unless he was found to be a good citizen his request for membership was returned to him. As a rule the individuals composing the company were well to do and men of influence. They provided for themselves their first home-made truck, stationed on Congress between Travis and Milam streets. A few years later the truck house was adjoining the old Erichson home, opposite Market Square on Milam street, next to the livery stable of M. L. Westheimer, which extended to the corner of Congress street. Just back of this was the old Texas House, a three-story frame, which was destroyed by fire with several lives in the '70s. The members organized the Hook and Ladder Loan Company (1894), which issued shares at \$50 each for the purpose of purchasing a lot and building a truck house. The first stock was issued to J. C. Baldwin, who took eight shares. Only members of the company could become stockholders in the loan association.

At the close of the volunteer service the company owned



**CHARLES HEIM.**

Charlie Heim was foreman of Stonewall No. 3 and active in the volunteer service for many years. Was Houston's Chief of Police in 1896-98. For 41 years he has conducted confectionery business at No. 610 Preston Avenue.



**CABEEN BLAKE.**

Alamo No. 8 had a staunch exponent in fire fighting in young Cabeen Blake. He and his associates did not serve long as volunteers, but as a junior company did well. Mr. Blake is chief deputy tax assessor of Harris County, and is deservedly popular among the citizens of the county. Cabeen Blake was also a member of the world champion Houston Light Guard.

its brick house and lot, while the city had title to the apparatus, consisting of one aerial truck and a small Preston truck and two horses.

The 1895 roster of members includes S. L. Sam, Chas. J. Wright, Gus A. Brandt, Arthur J. Binz, O. L. Cochran, C. J. Isenhour, Frank Dunn, C. J. Milby, J. C. Baldwin, W. H. Coyle, Albert Levy, L. T. Noyes, Tom P. Robinson, E. R. Parker, E. L. Coombs, Fred Kersten, Charlie Marston, Harry Reimann, C. Grunewald, Jas. A. Breeding, J. K. P. Gillaspie, Chris C. Beavens, O. C. Drew, Sam M. Williams, Sam P. Noland, Seymour Levy, Chas. A. Dumler, J. A. Moran, Henry C. House, J. Grossman, J. R. Cade, Gus Dreyling, Max Dreyling, H. F. MacGregor, Harry B. Johnson, L. F. DeLesdernier, M. Rosenthal.

With the reorganization of the Department in 1874, Hook and Ladder No. 1 exhibited that same spirit of fidelity to the volunteer cause that had characterized it for many years. The company refrained from taking part in the threshing out of differences that arose between rival companies, always maintaining conservatism and upholding its dignity among the other companies associated for the welfare of the public.

In 1874 Henry P. Roberts was the company's president; T. L. Blanton, vice president; William Cameron, secretary; Ed Milby, assistant secretary; Owen L. Cochran, treasurer; W. H. Coyle, foreman; Geo. L. Price, first assistant; Will Crossly, second assistant; L. T. Noyes, steward; A. O. Martial, driver.

1877—H. P. Roberts, president; S. C. Timpson, vice president; William Cameron, secretary; O. L. Cochran, treasurer; Chris C. Beavens, foreman; L. T. Noyes, first assistant; J. A. Sweeney, second assistant; W. H. Coyle, steward.

Minor changes in officials occurred for several years. The company preserved its organization, yet for intervals of several months, for one reason or another, no active service was rendered.

1882-83—S. Conradi, president; H. T. D. Wilson, vice president; W. T. Tuffly, secretary; O. L. Cochran, treas-



JOHN S. STEWART.

John Stewart's helping hand has been manifest in everything pertaining to Houston's growth. Today he is a big lawyer. In the yester-days he was a youngster imitating and emulating the men who were builders. John S. Stewart was the first president of Young America No. 7, one of the junior companies, and later joined Stonewall No. 3. Mr. Stewart has held many positions of honor and trust through suffrage of his fellow citizens, and for ten years was city attorney of Houston.

urer; Chas. E. Thavonat, foreman; J. J. Kneeland, first assistant; Harry Reimann, second assistant; J. K. P. Gillaspie, engineer; Tom Whitmarsh, driver.

1884-85—S. Conradi, president; H. E. Reimann, vice president; James A. Breeding, secretary; O. L. Cochran, treasurer; S. L. Sam, foreman; Robert Adair, first assistant; J. B. Perkins, second assistant; Hampton Cook, steward; Dan Phelps, driver.

1886-87—Henry C. House, president; H. E. Reimann, vice president; James A. Breeding, secretary; O. L. Cochran, treasurer; S. L. Sam, foreman; Robert Adair, first assistant; Chas. Dumler, second assistant; Sam Noland, steward; Dan Phelps, driver; W. McKenzie, tillerman.

1888-90—S. L. Sam, president; W. Hardy, vice president; James A. Breeding, secretary; O. L. Cochran, treasurer; Robert Adair, foreman; Chas. Dumler, first assistant; Fred Kersten, second assistant; S. P. Noland, steward; Dan Phelps, driver; Harry Hoffman, tillerman.

1891-93—S. L. Sam, president; Wm. Hardy, vice president; James A. Breeding, secretary; O. L. Cochran, treasurer; Chas. Dumler, foreman; Fred Kersten, first assistant; Fred DeLesdernier, second assistant; J. Moran, steward; Dan Phelps, driver; H. B. Uzzell, tillerman.

1894-95—Robert Adair, president; C. J. Wright, vice president; G. A. Brandt, secretary; O. L. Cochran, treasurer; Fred Kersten, foreman; Fred DeLesdernier, first assistant; E. R. Parker, second assistant; J. R. Cade, steward; Henry Uzzell, driver.

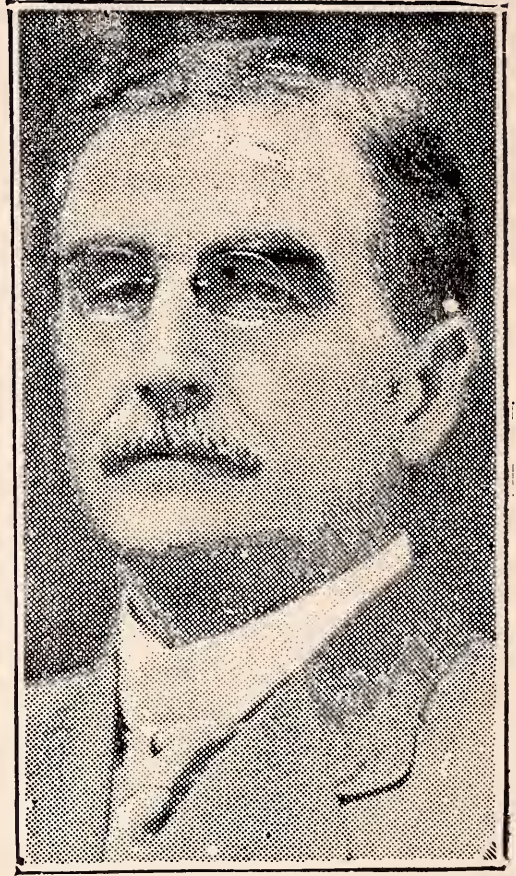
### HOOK AND LADDER, JUNIOR.

During the '80s E. L. Coombs presented the Junior Hook and Ladder Company a small truck equipped with ladders and all necessary paraphernalia for service. Unlike other donors of fire apparatus, Mr. Coombs insisted that the boys should make use of their truck—at least turn out at every alarm and make the run. The juniors lasted two years. The truck house adjoined Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, and it was their greatest pleasure to roll out ahead of the big truck.

Gus Dreyling, president; Webb Breeding, vice president; Claude Coombs, secretary; Fred Burke, foreman.

**HENRY F. MacGREGOR.**

A quiet and unassuming citizen is Henry F. MacGregor. There is no haughtiness in his manly makeup; no ostentation, no frivolity; yet he enjoys round-table stories to the fullest, and is a pleasant and companionable republican in a democratic stronghold. He is leader of the republican party in Texas and member of the National Executive committee of that party; locally, a member of the Z Z, Thalian and Country Clubs, and the Caledonian Society, and held membership in the volunteer fire service under the banner of Hook and Ladder No. 1.

**GEORGE A. GIBBONS.**

George A. Gibbons has been prominent in local, social, business and firemanic affairs for many years, and no member of the Hook and Ladder Company was more enthusiastic and earnest in his volunteer duties than Mr. Gibbons, in the bygone days when every good citizen worked for the city's advancement. Mr. Gibbons is well known in Masonic circles in Texas, and his character has always been above reproach. He is one of the city's big taxpayers, and in business is an associate in the Barringer-Norton Company, fashionable tailors.

## Dawning of a New Day.

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**W**HEN Mayor John T. Browne and cabinet of aldermen decided to relieve the people of the onerous duty of protecting the city from fire, they welded an important link in the chain of progress that has since encompassed vastly more territory and made of Houston a busy and thriving metropolis, increased population from 60,000 to approximately 135,000, augmented industrial plants tenfold, filled thousands of surrounding acres with homes, obliterated the barriers that kept ocean vessels from our doors and prevented neighborly communication with foreign shores, and made possible one of the most perfect fire-fighting combinations in the South as today exists under the supervision of Fire Commissioner H. A. Halverton and Fire Chief Fred C. Seibert.

Chief T. F. Ravell, in 1895, had the difficult task of taking charge of the equipment owned by the volunteers and arranging it in systematic manner to best subserve the several sections of the city. The force of 350 volunteers had by law been reduced to less than half a hundred salaried men. But Chief Ravell met the exigency and started the paid Department off at a winning pace by placing the apparatus and crews as follows:

At the Central Station was located Nos. 1 and 2, Chemical No. 4 and Hook and Ladder No. 1. George E. Wirt was captain and Louis Bradley driver. The following manned the apparatus:

Chemical No. 4—Henry Wooley, driver; Fred Horsford, nozzleman; Frank Medlenka, tankman.

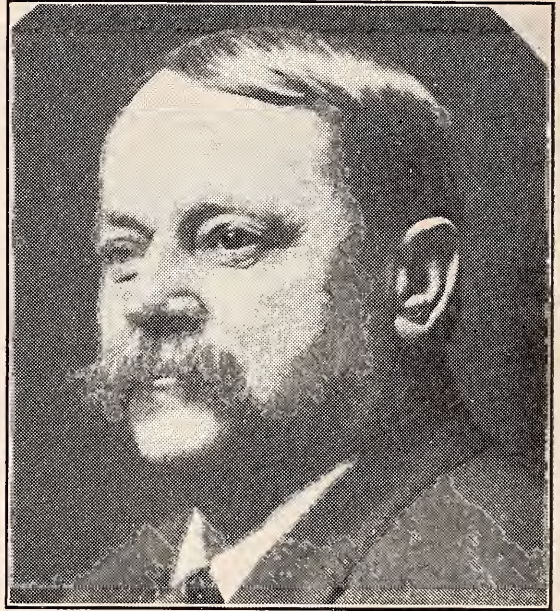
Hook and Ladder No. 1—Theodore Abadie, driver; Reginald Ollre, C. A. Trowbridge, Otto Kersten and Philip Jay, laddermen.

Steamer No. 2—John Donnelly, engineer; William Kaule, driver; Ed Wagner, stoker.

Hose Company No. 3, No. 408 Smith street—Herman

**J. MILT GEISELMAN.**

The Volunteer Department had a good friend in Alderman Milt Geiselman when he represented the Second Ward (1896-98) in the City Council. He was an active member of Stonewall No. 3 and personally was aware of the hardships the Department was compelled to endure on account of the weak condition of the municipal treasury. He believed the firemen could do more and better work with more equipment, and as a member of the fire committee so recommended. Mr. Geiselman is the senior member of J. M. Geiselman & Sons.

**J. J. WALKER.**

Joe Walker, in 1890-91, was first assistant chief under Tom Martin, and in his capacity had full direction at several blazes of consequence. His record as an active fireman was filled with experiences that few men would care to encounter. He was daring and brave and today bears scars of serious accidents sustained both as driver and assistant to the chief. He is an employe of the city.

Disсен, captain; Philip Graham, driver; Herman von Haxthausen, Herman Wagner and George Rooney, pipemen.

North Star Hose Company No. 4—Located on Montgomery and Gano streets.

Mechanic Hose Company No. 6, No. 1106 Washington—F. C. Fourmy, captain; Otto Lutz, driver; Otto Herzog, C. A. Doherty and Ed Bland, pipemen.

Washington No. 8 steamer, No. 1307 Crawford—Henry Damuth, captain; Henry Levy, hose wagon driver; Ed Shea, engineer; John Holliman, stoker; Frank Medlenka, steamer driver; J. S. Bernius, John Cobb and John Bone, pipemen.

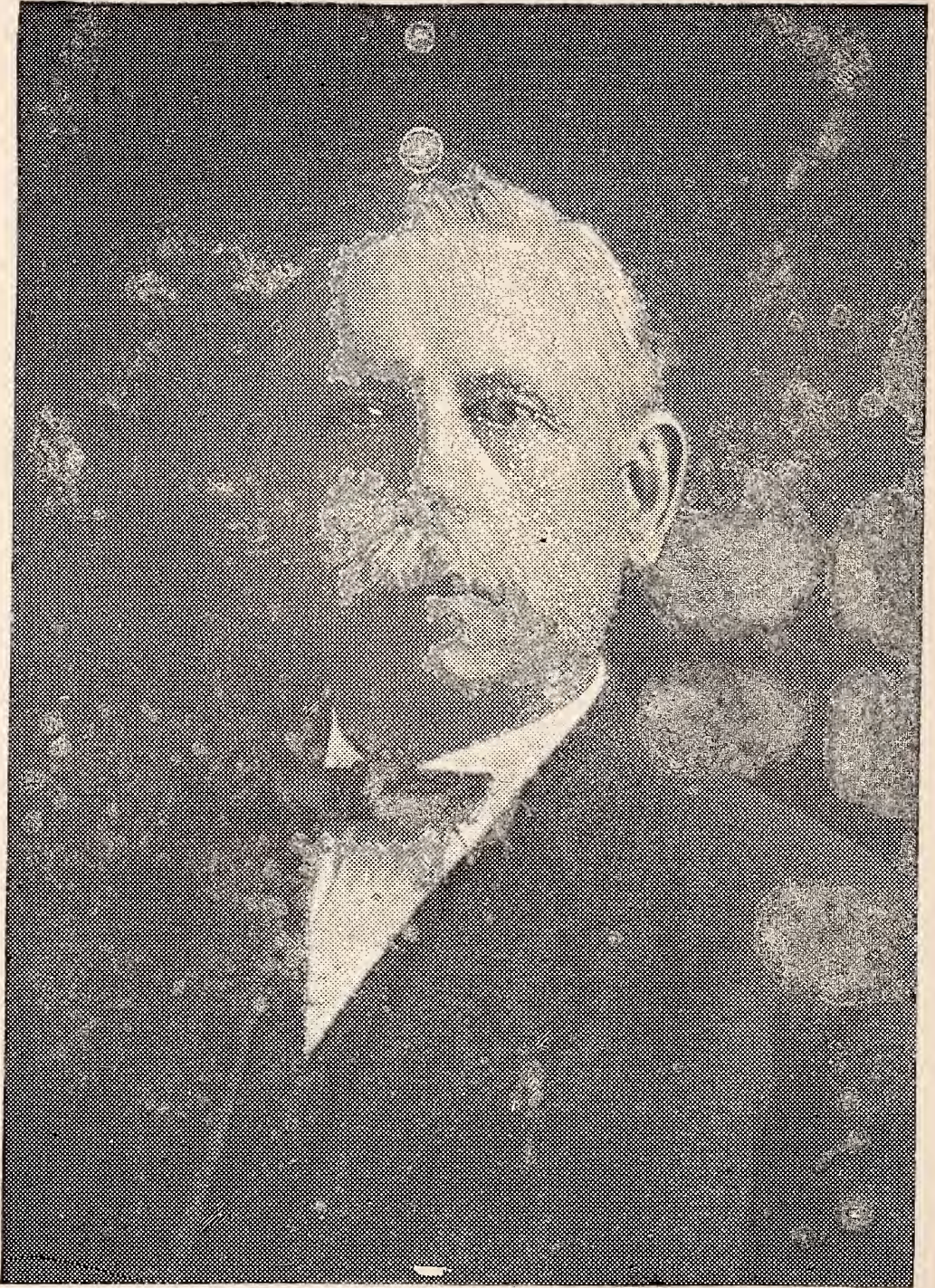
Hose Company No. 9, Fifth ward—Henry Donnelly, captain; Ed Franks, driver; Jesse Elkins, Ed Hill and G. W. Scarborough, pipemen.

Hose Company No. 10, No. 205 Chartres—Frank Hayes, captain; Henry Levy, driver; Ed Shea, Ed Anderson and Adam Chaloupka, pipemen.

In 1897-98 the Department consisted of three steamers, one chemical engine, two hook and ladder trucks, four hose carriages, two hose wagons, 26 horses and 49 men, exclusive of the chief and his assistant.

This year the installation of the fire alarm system was completed, and the entire citizenship, city officials and firemen felt exceedingly good at the innovation. Alderman Ben Riesner was the father of the Gamewell fire alarm system in Houston, and was heartily congratulated for his steadfast efforts in the council to procure a much needed system for locating fires and doing away with the general excitement and confusion that the universal cry of fire created. George L. Vaughan was appointed superintendent of the new system.

James J. Hussey succeeded Chief Ravell (1899) and further perfected the work so auspiciously begun of increasing the Department's efficiency. Jack P. Arto was assistant chief, and Clarence E. George was chief of the fire alarm system. A secretary was added to the Department during Chief Hussey's reign, C. E. Reilly being the appointee.



A. R. (HULDY) MILLER.

"Huldy" Miller was a volunteer in Washington No. 8. Born in Harris County, he spent his boyhood days in Houston and satisfied a growing ambition by chasing to every fire with any company he chanced to be near when the alarm sounded. Mr. Miller's popularity was evidenced several years ago when he received a splendid majority vote for county tax assessor, which office he filled with satisfaction to the public for two or three terms, refusing to stand for re-election. He is a big tax payer and a recognized progressive citizen.

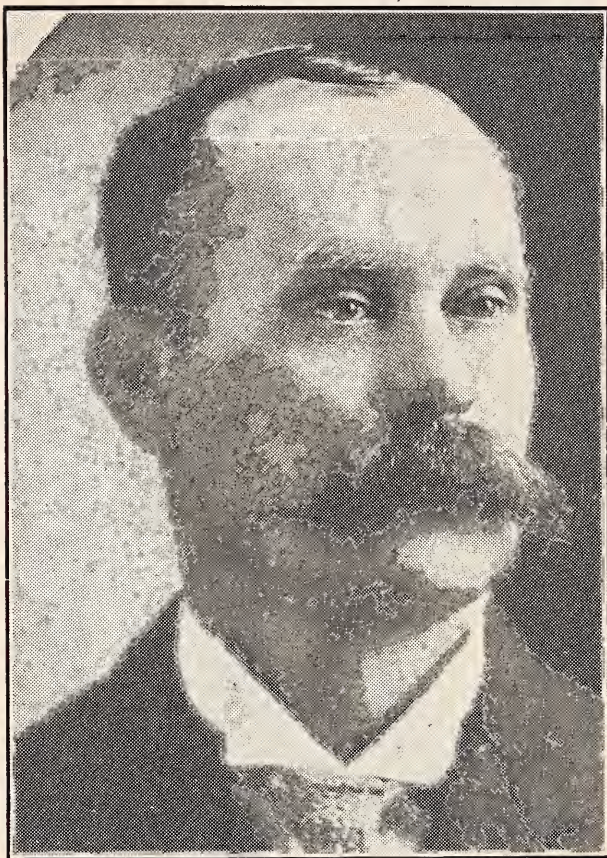
Jack P. Arto was chief in 1902-04; Herman Dissen, first assistant; E. L. Benson, second assistant; Clarence R. George, electrician; F. A. Peters, wire inspector; John S. Luckie, chief of line service.

A new central station had been constructed at the corner of Texas avenue and San Jacinto street, on the site of the old Sawyer homestead, at a cost of \$30,000. The building is of steel gray brick, two stories in height with floor space of 10,000 square feet, and facing 100 feet on Texas and 100 feet on San Jacinto; no particular architectural adornment, but adapted to the purposes for which it was designed; three broad arch entrances on either street for entrance and exit of the engines and trucks. On the lower floor, in the rear, is a completely equipped machine shop for making repairs, and during 1915, under Chief Fred Seibert's administration, his force of mechanics has rebuilt from an automobile frame a chemical engine that would be a creditable production of any factory. In the upper story are the offices of the chief, dormitory, gymnasium and bath rooms of the Fire Department, and the splendid electric fire alarm apparatus and police telegraph system, with offices of Chief Electrician Clarence George and his assistants. The building is steam heated and electric lighted.

In 1906 Tom P. O'Leary was made chief; Herman Dissen, first assistant; R. F. Ollre, second assistant; Clarence R. George, electrician; John S. Luckie, assistant electrician; James M. Stevens, wire inspector.

During this year two trucks (Nos. 14 and 15) were added to the Department's equipment, and located at Central Station.

Reginald F. Ollre was appointed chief in 1908 when Chief Tom O'Leary met his death in discharge of duty by the explosion of a carload of fireworks. Chief Ollre selected Allie L. Anderson as his first assistant; the same force remained in the electrical department as in the previous two years. No. 16 truck was added to the equipment at Central Station, and No. 14 truck was placed at No. 9 station.

**CHAS. C. RUGERS.**

Still a young man, but old in service, is Charlie Rutgers. At a tender age he had duties thrust upon him that gave him experience that few young men encounter. He has had a "rough road" to travel on the highway of life, but out of it all he stands today strong and robust, ready to meet any future adversities that may be lying in wait for him. His optimism has been a sustaining factor to him. He was a member of Seibert No. 10 in volunteer days, and holds fellowship in several benevolent orders.

**CHARLES W. RUGERS.**

One of the active members of the first steamer company—Liberty No. 2—and for several years foreman of the company and one of its representatives in the central firemen's body. Mr. Rutgers also was a leader in German society matters and one of the directors of the Volksfest Association, which celebrated German Day each year, participated in by Germans and Americans alike. Death claimed him on December 4, 1910.



Every chief engineer since the city assumed control of the Department received some recognition in increased facilities, and gradually the service became more efficient. The actual date of Houston's wonderful progress may be reckoned from the year 1900, when this section of the Gulf Coast was almost obliterated by the fiercest hurricane of modern times. The attention of the world was at once directed to the natural possibilities and wonderful resources of the little city at the head of tidewater, fifty miles inland from the beaten paths of the sea, with numerous lines of railroads stretching out their ribbons of steel to the bountiful harvest fields of the West and to the great industrial centers of the North and East, into the oil regions and vast rice production areas, and onto the plains where roam countless head of cattle. Houston is still growing, the Fire Department is growing, but is still inadequate to the demands of a metropolis.

In 1912 the present chief, Fred C. Seibert, assumed command, and while he has the advantage of the work accomplished by the chiefs of the past, he is building the strongest and most efficient Fire Department that Houston could hope for. His assistants—Bob Boyd and Ed Franks—like the chief himself, know the game and never let a fire get far away from them. The captains and crews are the cullings of past years' service, and they work with earnestness under a system that easily makes the present the best Department the city ever had.

Chief Seibert's advocacy of a training school for firemen, to be located at Station No. 2, is a measure calculated to improve the service further by eliminating raw material in case of vacancies occurring from one cause or another.

Among other improvements Chief Seibert deems necessary are new stations at Washington avenue and Houston Heights boulevard; at McGowen avenue and Hamilton street; at Loraine and West streets; at San Felipe and Myers streets; in the fine residential section of Montrose; in the newly acquired territory of Brunner; and on Capitol avenue near the county jail, together with apparatus for equipping them.



**JOHN D. ANDERSON.**

For many years John D. Anderson has driven one of the monster locomotives in passenger service between Houston and New Orleans on the Sunset-Central system. Back in the '70s he assisted in organizing Mechanic No. 6 and remained a volunteer until 1895. His residence in Houston dates from 1870. He was one of the blue-ribbon runners of No. 6, and helped win the great races in 1877-78 in Waco and Houston.

The 1915 Department consists of property valued at \$387,605.54.

### AT CENTRAL STATION.

F. C. Siebert, chief; J. A. Boyd, first assistant; W. E. Franks, second assistant; J. M. Werner, secretary; J. R. Donly, T. W. Wolf, chauffeurs; Chas. Perry, chemicalman; Tom Powers, driver last chief.

No. 1 Auto Service Truck—T. H. Rickard, captain; H. Pollard, chauffeur; R. Cavanaugh, J. R. Kolb, W. H. Stewart, W. Perry, W. J. Phillips, laddermen; J. E. Payne, lieutenant.

No. 1 Auto Chemical—L. Smith, chauffeur; F. Brady, lieutenant; H. Clark, A. T. Zueck, chemicalmen.

No. 1 Hose Wagon—J. Davidson, captain; T. Daly, driver; J. Little, C. E. Carroll, C. R. Webb, O. L. Henning, pipemen.

No. 1 Steamer—A. Roper, engineer; J. M. Framme, driver; D. C. Fisher, stoker.

Watchman No. 1 Station—F. Johnson.

Water Tower No. 1—W. H. Rittenhouse, captain; Ed. Lee, driver; C. D. Smith, water director.

Aerial Truck No. 1—H. Barrett, lieutenant; G. Wilson, driver; J. C. Robinson, G. Fisher, B. V. Cecil, laddermen.

### HOSE AND STEAMER No. 2.

#### No. 319 SAMPSON STREET.

W. Heath, captain; O. L. Hooper, lieutenant; E. Shea, engineer; E. J. Miller, driver wagon; A. Hughes, driver steamer; F. Bugglin, O. V. Bowers, G. Schweinback, pipemen; R. B. Wynn, watchman.

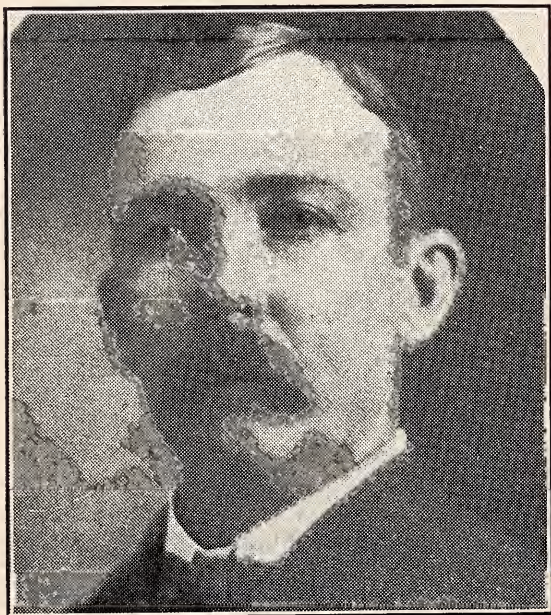
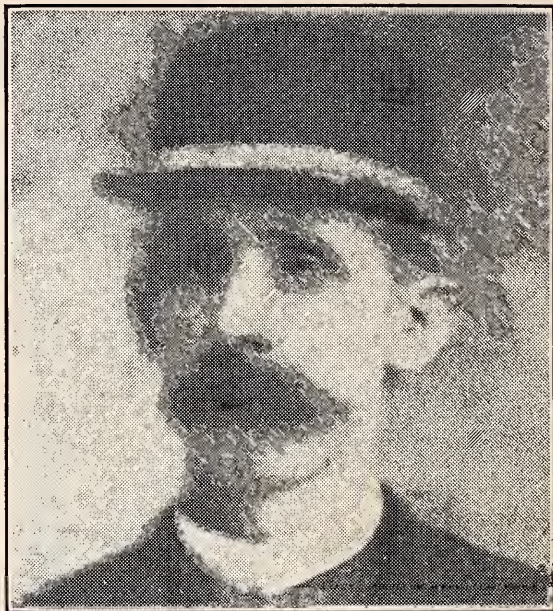
### HOSE CO. 3 AND CHEMICAL No. 12.

#### No. 1919 HOUSTON AVENUE.

Pat Daly, captain; A. J. Helman, driver; H. Hundt, lieutenant; W. Walker, E. E. Hard, B. J. Cafferky, pipemen; W. E. Hundt, chauffeur No. 12 Auto Chemical; B. Coffin, J. Riesner, E. J. Cavanaugh, chemicalmen; F. Ripka, driver Supply Wagon No. 23; H. Gutappel, watchman.

**EX-CHIEF E. R. PARKER.**

Eugene R. Parker was chief in 1888-90. Under his regime the Firemen's Monument was acquired and the Department took on new life. He had old and worn apparatus to work with, but with it practically demonstrated his ability as a fireman. Chief Parker, as soon as he took office, offered a silver trumpet to the company having the largest representation at fires from July 1, 1888, to May 1, 1889. After the department entered the paid service Mr. Parker was fire marshal for a number of years. He is one of four living ex-chiefs and is connected with company No. 4 in the South End.

**EX-CHIEF THOS. F. RAVELL.**

Tom Ravell was elected chief in May, 1894, while in the volunteer service. On the 1st of May, 1895, the Department entered upon paid system, and Mr. Ravell was appointed chief and allowed five men to each company. He joined Stonewall No. 3 in 1882, and had seen splendid service, adapting himself to a thorough understanding of a chief's duties. He served with distinction under two city administrations.

## HOSE CO. AND STEAMER No. 4.

CORNER LOUISIANA AND BERRY STREETS.

C. P. Brown, captain; N. Bouderaux, engineer; E. E. Hughes, driver steamer; F. F. Hines, driver wagon; V. C. Ammons, Ed. Amendt, W. S. Radley, pipemen; E. R. Parker, watchman.

## HOSE CO. AND STEAMER No. 5.

No. 910 HARDY STREET.

R. T. Smith, captain; J. Ward, engineer; E. F. Montgomery, driver wagon; J. B. Calhoun, driver steamer; G. H. James, lieutenant; J. P. Mayo, M. Daly, H. R. LeMay, J. Harvey, pipemen; L. Seibert, watchman.

## AUTO PUMPER No. 6.

No. 1702 WASHINGTON AVENUE.

Chas. Fisher, captain; Ed. Pittman, engineer lieutenant; C. Middlekauf, chauffeur; R. Dietz, Gus Rose, L. T. Bourden, C. M. Harper, pipemen.

Old Reel—C. A. Dortic, captain; G. W. Pratt, driver; C. W. Schoellkopf, pipeman; J. W. Miller, watchman.

## No. 7 WAGON, STEAMER AND TRUCK.

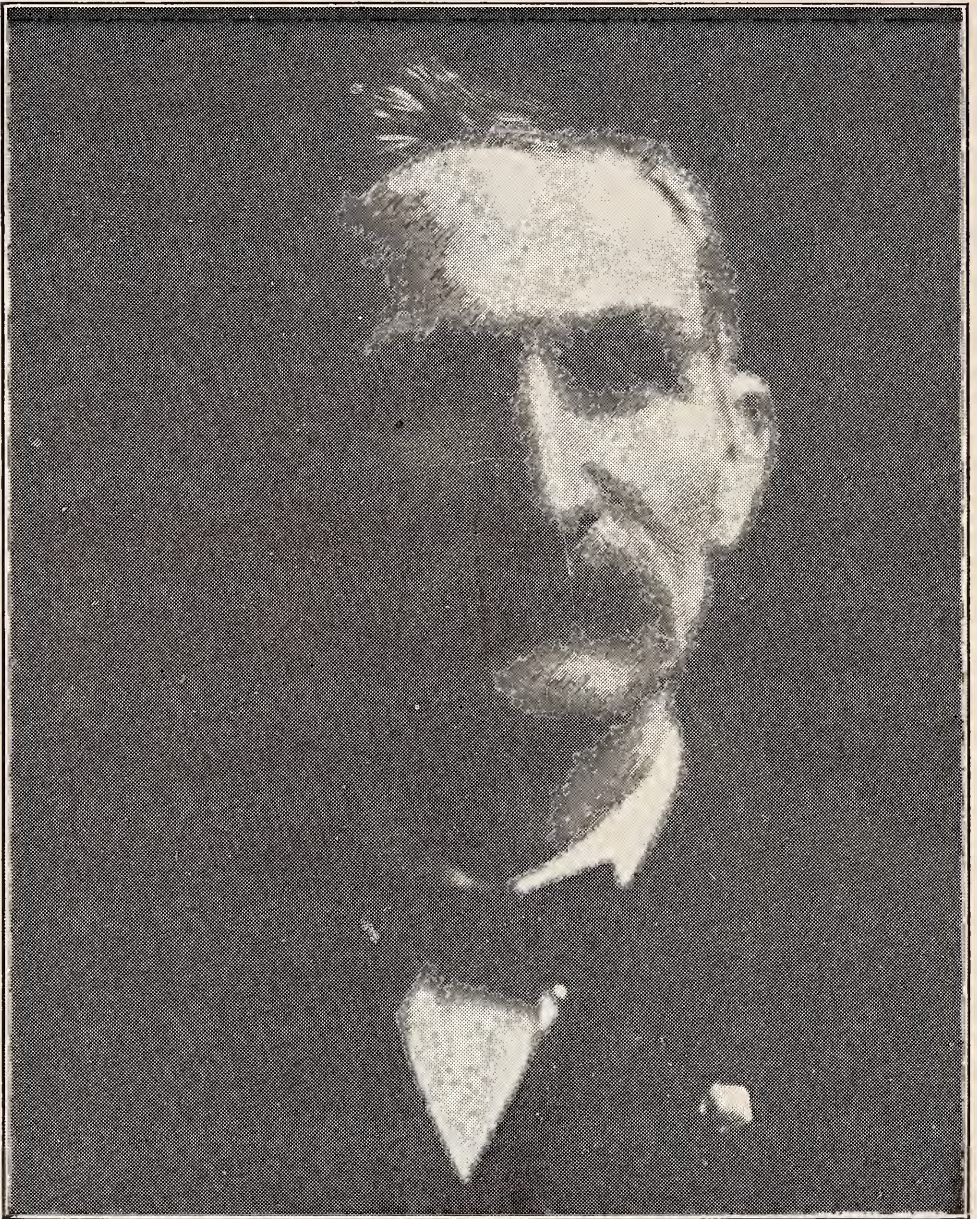
No. 2403 MILAM STREET.

D. C. King, captain; T. D. Gilmore, engineer; F. T. Harrison, lieutenant wagon; C. D. Cash, driver wagon; J. D. Rizzo, driver truck; J. M. Hart, driver steamer; L. Lazzio, pipeman; J. W. Wease, ladderman, truck; J. E. Smith, pipeman; B. Carroll, W. A. Donaldson, C. R. Baum, Fred Pittman, laddermen; Phil Jay, watchman.

## HOSE CO. AND STEAMER No. 8.

No. 1307 CRAWFORD STREET.

C. J. Ollre, captain; H. T. Levy, engineer; R. Beecher, stoker; C. Camp, driver; F. Cartinalo, lieutenant; F. E. Wilson, pipemen; J. D. Fritche, driver wagon; W. H. Terry, T. A. Clary, pipemen; J. C. Patterson, watchman.



**MATT DRENNAN.**

Matt Drennan was a member of old Stonewall No. 3, and no one enjoyed firemanic life more than he. Mr. Drennan always was a man of practical ideas and his suggestions were quick to be accepted on account of their practicability—and he demonstrated with his muscle the ideals of his intellect. Matt Drennan has been a prominent figure in city affairs for many years, and is now a commissioner of Houston, having charge of the street and bridge department.

## HOSE CO., STEAMER AND TRUCK No. 9.

CORNER HOGAN AND FREEMAN STREETS.

Otto Kersten, captain; C. F. Miller, engineer; G. W. Richardson, lieutenant; O. W. Ward, lieutenant wagon; F. L. Tull; driver wagon; T. L. Waring, driver steamer; J. Obrien, driver truck; E. S. McAnnly, J. H. McBride, J. A. Frye, laddermen; H. H. Wohlt, E. C. Turner, G. C. Ripka, Joe Daly, pipemen; Hy Donnelly, watchman.

## OLD FIRE STATION NO. 9.

No. 910 KEENE STREET.

Hayes aerial truck, 75-foot extension. Not in use.

## HOSE CO. AND STEAMER No. 10.

No. 205 CHARTRES STREET.

Ed. Smith, captain; A. J. Chaloupka, engineer; H. Hughes, stoker; E. Hartwell, driver wagon; G. Cooper, driver steamer; Wm. Dempsy, E. E. Wells, pipemen; H. Damuth, watchman.

## FIRE STATION NO. 11.

Station No. 11 under construction at Brunner, corner Washington and Fowler streets, at which will be stationed the chemical engine built at the shop of Central Fire Station.

MISCELLANEOUS DATA OF THE DEPARTMENT  
FOR YEAR ENDING 1914.

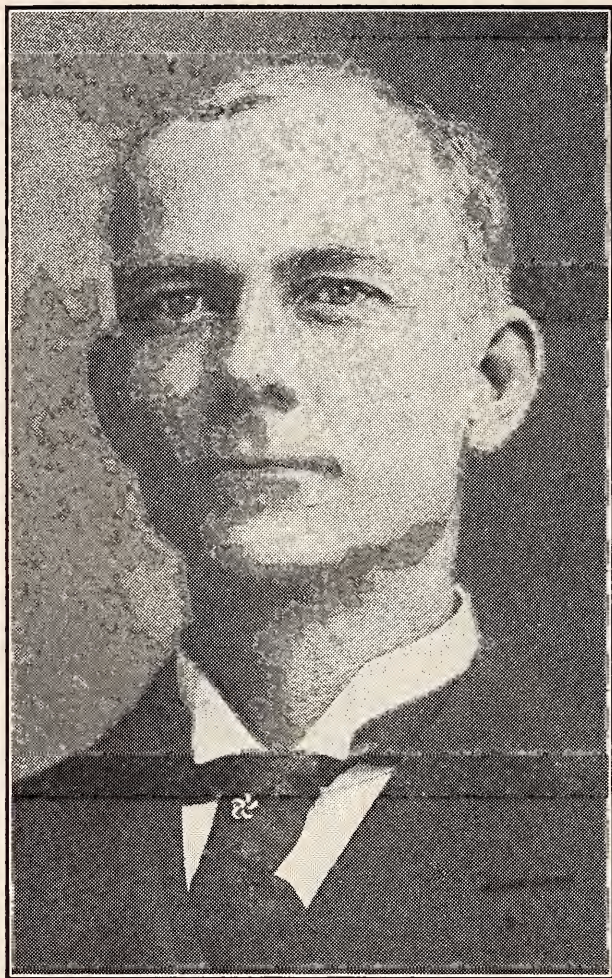
Total regular firemen at all stations, 129; total watchmen, 11.

Cost of maintenance, \$165,577.15.

Total value, \$387,605.54.

Number of fires, 797.

Total property fire loss, \$555,783.05.



**JOHN F. USENER.**

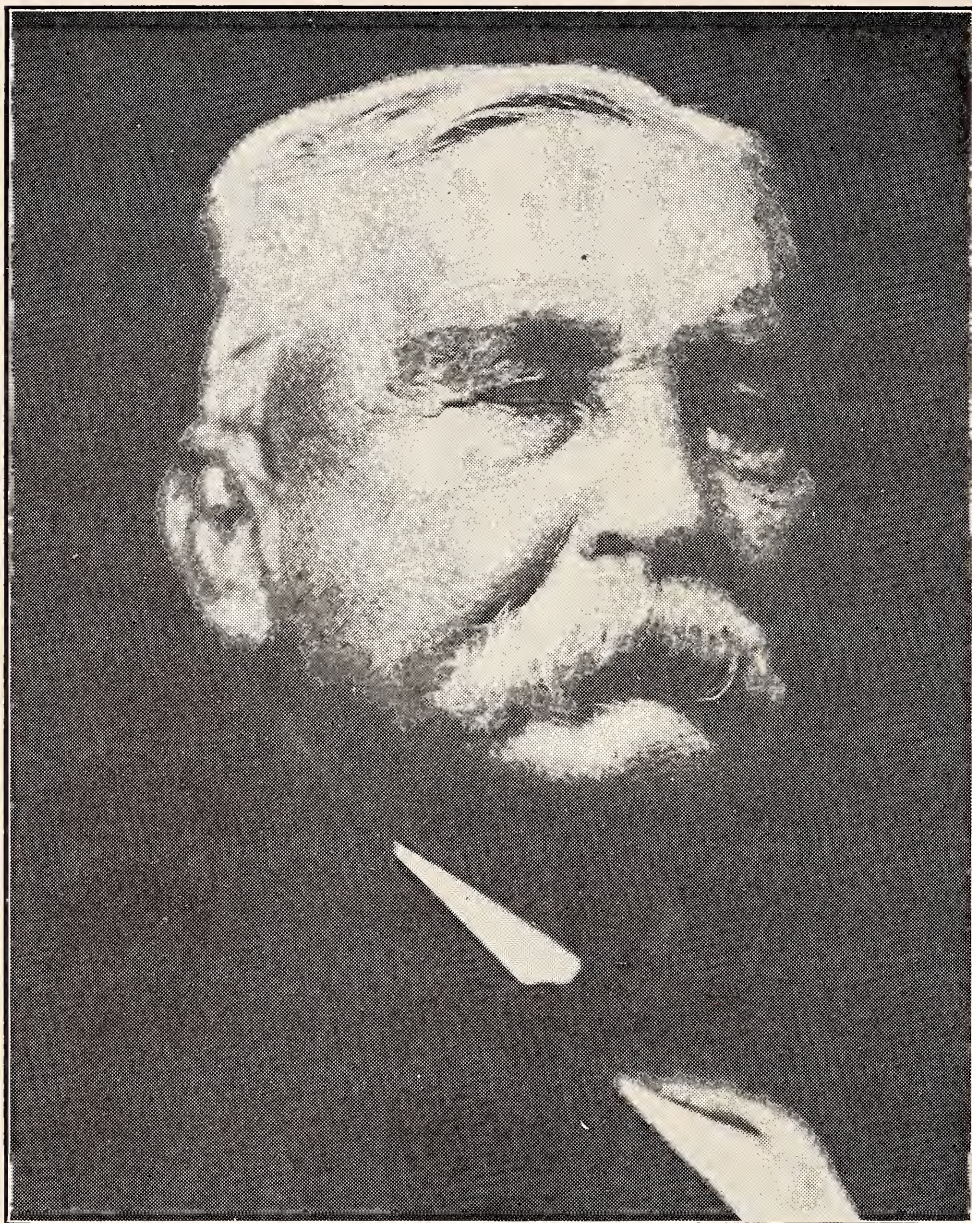
One of the best fire companies in the junior class in the early '80s, was Alert No. 9, composed of the larger boys. This company took over the small hand pumper that had been in service with Young America No. 7 and Eagle No. 7, which disbanded in the order named. John F. Usener, chief engineer at the Houston Electric Company's power station, was foreman of Alert, and to his untiring energy is due in great measure the success of the company. Individually he painted and lettered fifty belts for his members after being made by a local saddler out of patent leather strap.

**E. B. CUSHING.**

Edward B. Cushing was one of the young and active members of Eagle Fire Company No. 7, but resigned to attend the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, from which he graduated with honors in the civil engineering class. Mr. Cushing hails from an old and honorable pioneer family of early Houstonians, his father, E. H. Cushing, having owned and edited the Telegraph, in olden times. Mr. Cushing holds the important position of chief engineer of construction of the Sunset-Central railroad lines.

**EDWARD SMALLWOOD.**

The memory of Ed Smallwood is fresh in the minds of old volunteers and citizens, for no man served a good citizenship better than he, no duty imposed upon him was ever disregarded, and all the duties incumbent upon him as a Christian and Mason were cheerfully executed by him. Mr. Smallwood was a newspaper man in Houston, but removed to Kerrville for his health, and there published a paper until his death. He was a staunch volunteer fireman in Hook and Ladder Company No. 1.



SAM S. ASHE.

In reconstruction days Sam S. Ashe was prominent in purifying the disturbed political conditions in Harris County. He was elected sheriff at a time when the life of a democratic office holder was in jeopardy, and to Sam Ashe more than anyone else is due the establishing of a white man's government in Houston. He has been honored by his people with several positions of trust and in them all left an undefiled record, as justice of the peace, county commissioner, sheriff and tax collector. As a token of his firemanic service he was presented by his fellow members of Protection No. 1 with an elegant oil painting of himself. He is senior member of the firm of Ashe & Fitch, real estate agents.

## San Jacinto Day==Firemen's Day.

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IT IS ever commendable to celebrate those days for which our ancestors staked their lives and endured privations so dire we can scarcely conceive of in this time of plenty and comfort, when effort at living is minimized by modern discovery and invention. The fruits of the achievements of those heroic pioneers admonish us how base a thing it is to allow memories of their deeds to become dimmed by the destroying hand of time. Yet it is too true that sentimentality in humanity is waning as the years roll onward. We are prone to forget, and in the forgetting allow memories to lapse concerning deeds performed by others that we may live in a brighter day and enjoy blessings the foundation of which was consecrated by the life-blood of the noble martyrs whom we simply designate our ancestors.

Houston's Volunteer Fire Department was an object of pride of her people. They were dined and feasted by womankind, whose tender hearts swelled with proud enthusiasm that their fathers, husbands, sons and sweethearts were parts of an organization which had for its objective the performance of acts beneficial to homes and firesides, the protection of life and property, and as a guarantee that whatever a man shall do in the name of law and order, or what he shall build for the common good, that shall be fostered and cherished by the strong arm of organized effort.

When the Volunteers decided in 1875 to adopt the anniversary of the battle of San Jacinto as Firemen's Day in Houston the action met with universal approbation, and the manner in which the fire laddies celebrated the occasion was in every way worthy of the great event it intended to commemorate. The postoffice and business houses closed and a local holiday was proclaimed. Flags and bunting were displayed from buildings along the main thoroughfares and the Lone Star shed its glory and effulgence from banners at practically every point of vantage throughout the little city. The chivalric spirit of boys prompted them to climb to the



Mechanic No. 6, with old and new engines, in front of Agricultural Hall, State Fair Grounds, just before their world-record race in 1878.

topmost boughs of trees and flaunt the Texas flag to the breeze in mute acclaim of the freedom offered by the triumph of the white man. Everything betokened a holiday, and everybody was dressed in their best to do honor to the festivities. Before the hour for the parade sidewalks, windows and awnings were lined with spectators awaiting the pageant. All day of the 20th the ladies would be engaged in procuring flowers, vines and evergreens and making wreaths, garlands, festoons, bouquets, etc., for decorating the engines, trucks, reels and wagons at the several fire stations, and all night long scores of them would lend helping hands in the artistic embellishment of the apparatus, each coterie of matrons and maidens in exultant expectation that their accomplishment would excel all others.

An old newspaper of the late '80s contains the following account of a Firemen's Day parade:

"At its head was Herb's Light Guard Band of 24 pieces. Then came the Houston Light Guard, 36 men, Captain Frank Reichardt in command. Then carriages containing the mayor, aldermen and city officials. Following was a carriage in which was seated Mrs. Ellis Benson, wife of a veteran of San Jacinto. Following were the decorated trucks, carriages and steamers of the Department.

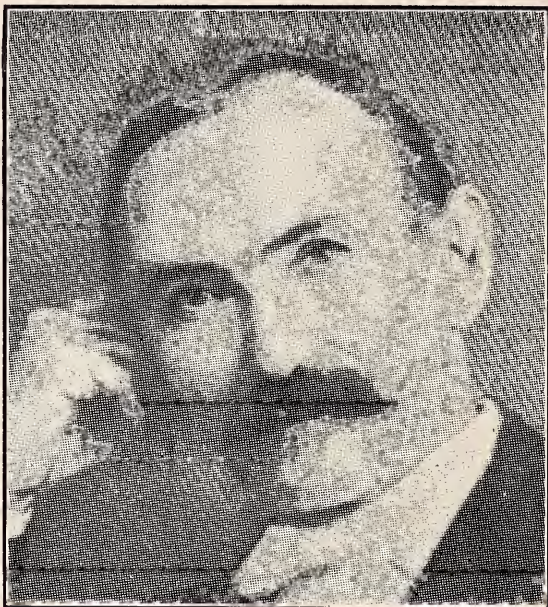
"Protection No. 1, the oldest in the State, presented a fine appearance. Harry Crutcher handled the ribbons over the company's beautiful span of grays. Upon the stand over the reel were displayed three sets of silver service won by the company in prize contests. The wagon was hung with floral wreaths, stars and other designs, and the spokes and felloes of the wheels were entwined with evergreens and roses.

"Hook and Ladder No. 1 followed. Dan Phelps drew the lines over a spanking pair of grays attached to the truck, which was handsomely decorated. Streamers, flags, bunting and flowers hung from the truck in profusion and beautiful contrast. The standards were surmounted with beautiful bouquets and a charming arch encircled the truck.

"Stonewall No. 3 came next, with Tom Ravell driving the chargers. The vehicle was attractively decorated. An immense Japanese parasol towered above the vehicle, from the ribs of which hung trinkets of various kinds. The staff was entwined with vari-colored ribbons. Beneath the

**SIDNEY WESTHEIMER.**

The name of Westheimer extends far back in Houston history, and Sidney Westheimer is the oldest living member of the family. "Sid," the name he is familiarly known by, has been a worker all his life, in the fore ranks of business, fun and frolic, and it seems he will never grow old. In the days of the volunteer fire service Mr. Westheimer belonged to Protection No.1. Today he is president of the Westheimer Undertaking Company in Houston.

**CHARLES KINZBACH.**

Charlie Kinzbach is strictly a Houston product of manhood and knows the fire fighting business. Far back in volunteer history his name is prominently connected with the service as president of Jones No. 4 and in Curtin No. 9. He is well known and popular, and for a time was a member of the city democratic executive committee. Mr. Kinzbach is one of the switchboard operators in the city electrical department.

umbrageous shadow of this unique parasol sat the company's little queen, Miss Edna McNally. Conspicuously grouped about the queen were figures in full uniform representing the ex-chiefs of the Department—Joseph F. Meyer, Ben A. Riesner, J. K. P. Gillaspie and Martin Curtin. Conspicuously emblazoned upon the carriage was their prize record, '55 seconds.' (This record was the fastest time in covering a certain distance and getting water with a horse-drawn vehicle.)

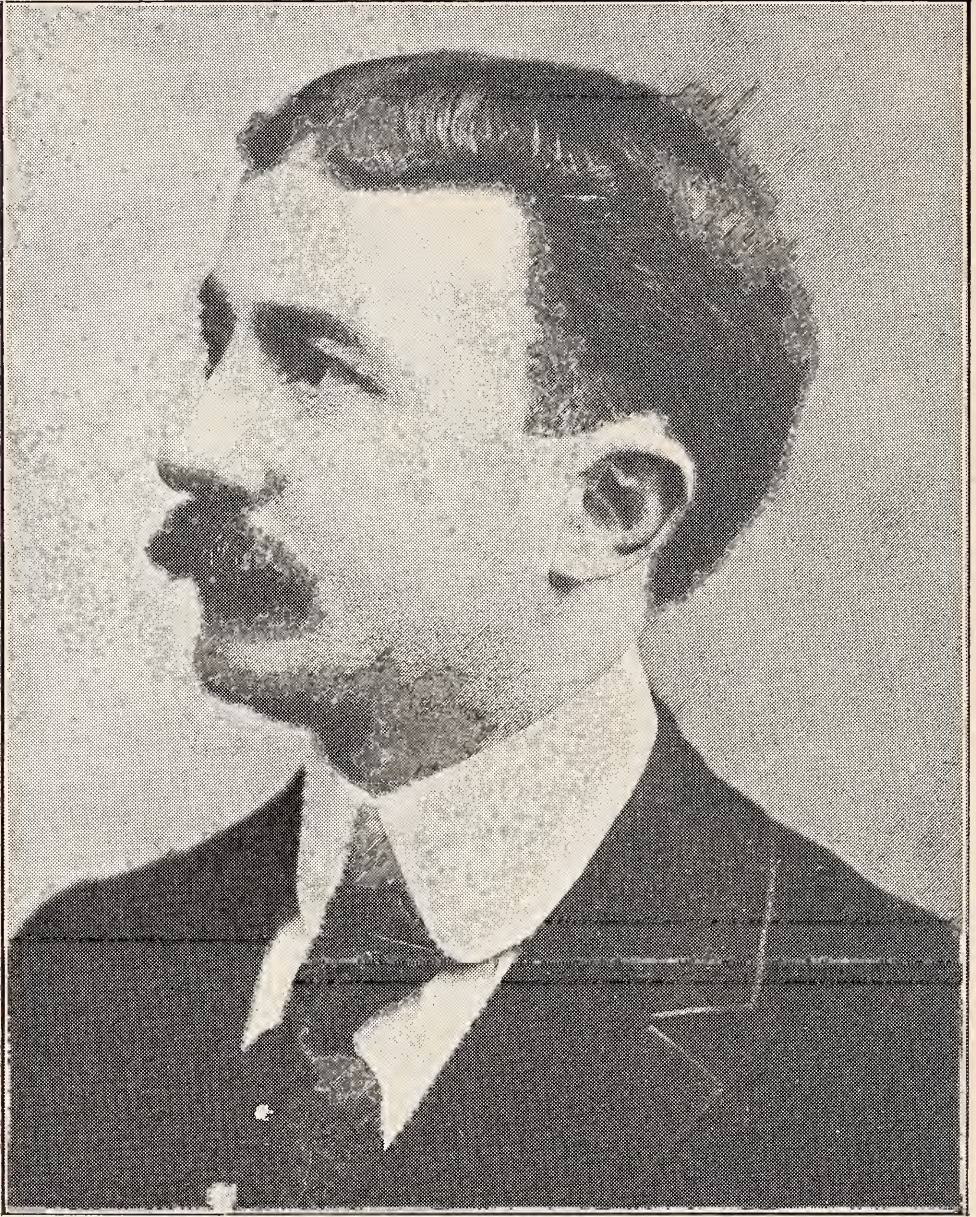
"Hook and Ladder, Junior, came next, with beautifully decorated truck. Before the truck was led a pretty pony. Gus Dreyling was foreman, with 16 'men' in line. Master Claude Coombs and little Miss Eloise Lusk were seated upon the truck.

"Mechanic No. 6 was appropriately decorated. A roomy canopy hemmed in with flowers and evergreens shaded the surface of the vehicle. Beneath the canopy sat Mr. Ellis Benson, old, infirm and blind, a survivor of the battle of San Jacinto. Grouped about him, representing the coming generation, were Leroy Beach, Willie Fourmy, Annie Fenwick and Bertie Pereira. A golden eagle towered above them all bearing in its beak the figures '46', (representing the record for running a certain distance and getting water by hand-pulled pumper). Graceful festoons, appropriate designs and a profusion of bouquets made this wagon one of the most attractive in the parade. Al Bilby handled the ribbons.

"Curtin No. 9 reel came next, covered with a profusion of flowers and wreaths. The wheels presented a mass of revolving roses and evergreens, entwined so that the revolutions blended the colors with happy effect. The company's dandy team, 'Parker' and 'Gillaspie,' a pair of duns, pranced in front of the reel, while Jeff Campbell manipulated the reins. Beside him sat little Miss Beulah Houlk. The company's motto, 'Tried and True,' hung upon either side of the vehicle, emblazoned upon banners of gay colors."

On former like occasions, when steamers were in service, their decorations were beautifully different from the trucks and reels, on account of the domes and other necessary characteristics. The mouth of the dome was decorated to represent in floral effect smoke and fire, while the fire-box was filled with bright red flowers representing the lurid glow of the furnace.

With the passing of the Volunteer Fire Department into



FRANK J. WALTER.

He was just a boy in his teens when Curtin No. 9 was organized, but he led Sam Barrett and Henry (Sonny) Leonhardt to Dad Levy's junk shop to show them a big force pump he had seen there. Dad Levy gave the boys the pump. Sam Barrett was some genius, and Frank knew that all he had to do was to show the pump to Sam and an engine would be the result. So it was. These boys built the first Curtin No. 9 in Barrett's back yard, on Preston Street near Tenth Street. Frank Walter is a representative citizen of Houston today, and enjoys telling stories of his boyhood. Before the days of the telephone Sam Barrett invented a contrivance to talk over wires, and one day disappeared from his boyhood haunts. Frank says the next time he saw Sam he was all dolled up and wearing a silk hat, with actual money in his pockets. Curtin No. 9 passed into older hands, and the firemanic ambition of Frank Walter ceased.

the rapacious maw of commercialism incident to the operation of a big city, the Houston of the yesterdays lost an agency for pleasure and pride, and the volunteers a means of pleasurable energy, that can never come back, and causes old-timers to yearn for a return of the season when more play days were interspersed among the work days.

## Our Galveston Friends.

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SEVERAL times has Houston been forced to call upon Galveston firemen for help when raging flame seemed beyond local control, and always the appeal was answered in the briefest time compatible with existing conditions. Not only were men, machines and hose afforded by the Galveston volunteers, but great risk was encountered in extra fast railroad service in making flying runs on such occasions. Fifty miles in 55 minutes is the record run on a fire appeal, and this was accomplished by the Galveston, Houston & Henderson road in 1878 when the Main street block between Congress and Preston burned. As we journey along the road of commercialism let us not forget that Galveston's volunteers have been kind to us.





**SAMUEL M. WILLIAMS AND JAMES B. CATO**  
In First Volunteer Firemen's Uniform (1866),  
Blue Shirt and Black Trousers.

**SAMUEL M. WILLIAMS.**

Son of Mathew R. Williams, a participant in the battle of San Jacinto. Joined Hook and Ladder No. 1 in 1866. Served during the war as a member of Waul's Texas Legion and was captured at Vicksburg. Mr. Williams descends from an old and chivalrous Texas family, and has made Houston his home since the civil war.



**JAMES B. CATO.**

Joined Hook and Ladder No. 1 before the war. Enlisted and was in a number of battles, finally being captured at the siege of Vicksburg. After the war he was active in reorganizing the Hook and Ladder company and was elected its foreman, succeeding Maj. Dick Manghum.



CHRIS C. BEAVENS, HENRY P. ROBERTS  
CHAS. S. MARSTON

Prominent citizens and olden-time firemen



**W. E. HUMPHREVILLE.**

Commodore Billy Humphreville has seen Houston grow from a town and has had a hand in its building. Back in the volunteer days he served with the nearest company when an alarm sounded, helped to pull the engine back to the station, but did not have to answer roll call. Mr. Humphreville is a member of the Masonic order, prominent in the building and contracting business, and was one of Governor Ferguson's appointees on the Board of Pilots for this port.

## Some of Houston's Big Fires.

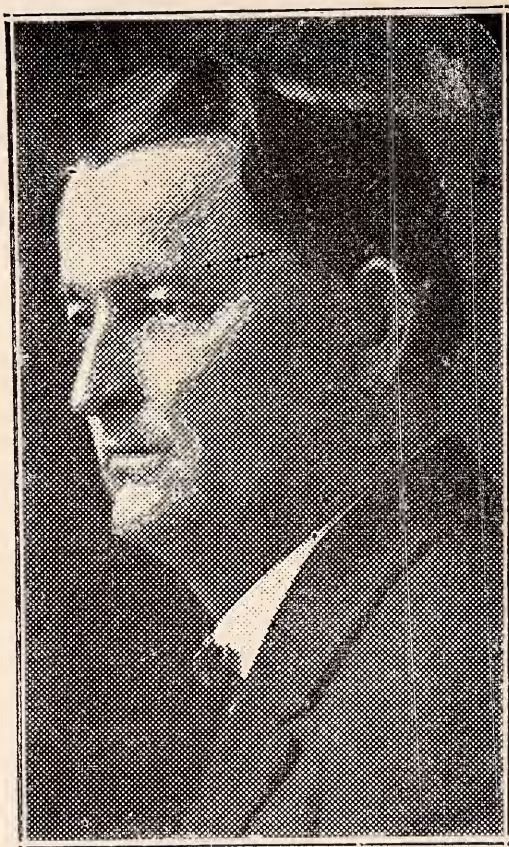
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**I**N 1840 Houston had an estimated population of 2,000. An old newspaper gives the voting strength at 325. This population lived in log cabins and rudely constructed shacks and tents. The Allens had established a "boom," and people came through every avenue of travel to seek a home in the new Eldorado, so glowingly pictured in prospective circulars scattered broadcast over the country. As fast as trees could be felled and stripped of their branches the logs were dragged to town and put into houses. Burning brush caused a few house fires, but little damage was done, and every blaze could be accounted for. Finally, the packet mail brought newspapers telling of destructive conflagrations in New York, Mobile, Vicksburg and Natchez, and a surmise that an organized attempt was being made to "burn the country." So jealous were the newcomers of the splendid beginning they had made toward establishing a town with wonderful possibilities, that the news of the big fires caused considerable gossip. Three fires occurred in the new town, entailing total destruction in each case. The first of these was the home of Robert Wilson, without apparent cause; a week later the homes of two other citizens went up in smoke, also under peculiar circumstances. At once a night patrol was established, as had been done in New Orleans previously, to prevent supposed firebugs plying their vocation. Excitement soon subsided, but not without a suspicious and searching glance at every stranger. A church had been constructed and in its short tower a bell was swung to serve the double purpose of calling people to worship and of sounding alarms for fire. This bell was known as the "fire bell," and when the first court house was built provision was made for it in the belfry.

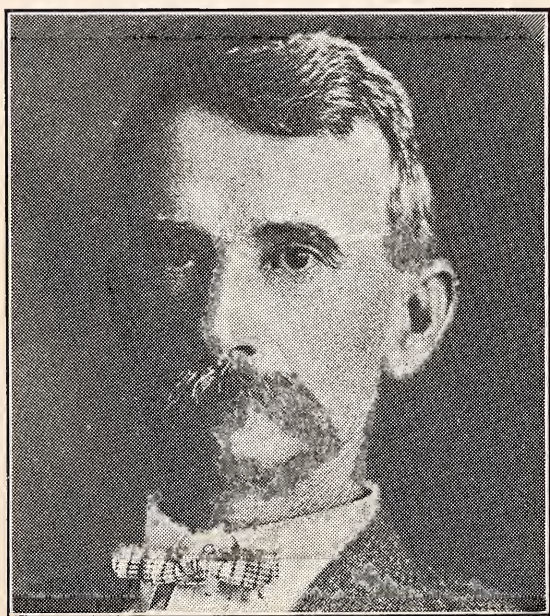
Houston's first "big" fire occurred in 1846, when a row of houses on Congress avenue was destroyed. This fire was the source of gossip for several months, and doubtless, in comparison, was as big as the conflagration at Chicago that

**DAVID FITZGERALD.**

City Commissioner Dave Fitzgerald, in charge of Houston's splendid water system, was a member of Adams No. 10, located on Shea street, Fifth Ward. Mr. Fitzgerald is still a young man and enjoys the confidence of a major portion of Houston's voting population, as evidenced at the last city election. He has united with all movements to advance Houston.

**DAVE McNALLY.**

James Dave McNally assisted in organizing Mechanic No. 6, but removed his membership to Stonewall No. 3, in which he held all offices; was first assistant under Chief Bill Coyle. Has had several narrow escapes from death; at City Mills fire a falling wall knocked nozzle from hands; at the Tom Bond fire in 1875 an iron safe fell from second story, missing him by three feet; at the Mellinger fire on Main street was astraddle of window with nozzle, roof fell in, leaving him suspended on bare wall, with flames below him; while engineer of Brooks No. 5 in 1881 lost a finger at the Coleman fire on Chartres street. Good authority on Department affairs in volunteer days.



raged from October 6 to 9, 1871. At any rate, that was the first big fire.

In 1858 fire destroyed the block bounded by Main, Congress, Travis and Preston streets, and a portion of the opposite block on Main street. Valiant work was done by the Bucket Brigade and the Hunnelman pumper belonging to Liberty No. 2. Hook and Ladder No. 1 had its first tryout on this occasion. This fire had its origin in the rear of a saloon and gambling house at the corner of Main and Congress and was fanned by a north wind.

In 1859 fire originating in Ed Daly's carpenter shop, on Congress street, wiped out the block bounded by Congress, Main, Franklin and Travis. A single-story brick storehouse, facing on Main street and adjoining the location of the present Union National Bank, was the only one not of frame construction. It, too, became debris. Daly's carpenter shop was a rendezvous for the genteel idlers of the town—lawyers, doctors, merchants—from breakfast till dinner, and from the noon meal until early candlelight. It was at the noon hour that the fire originated, presumably among shavings under Daly's work-bench.

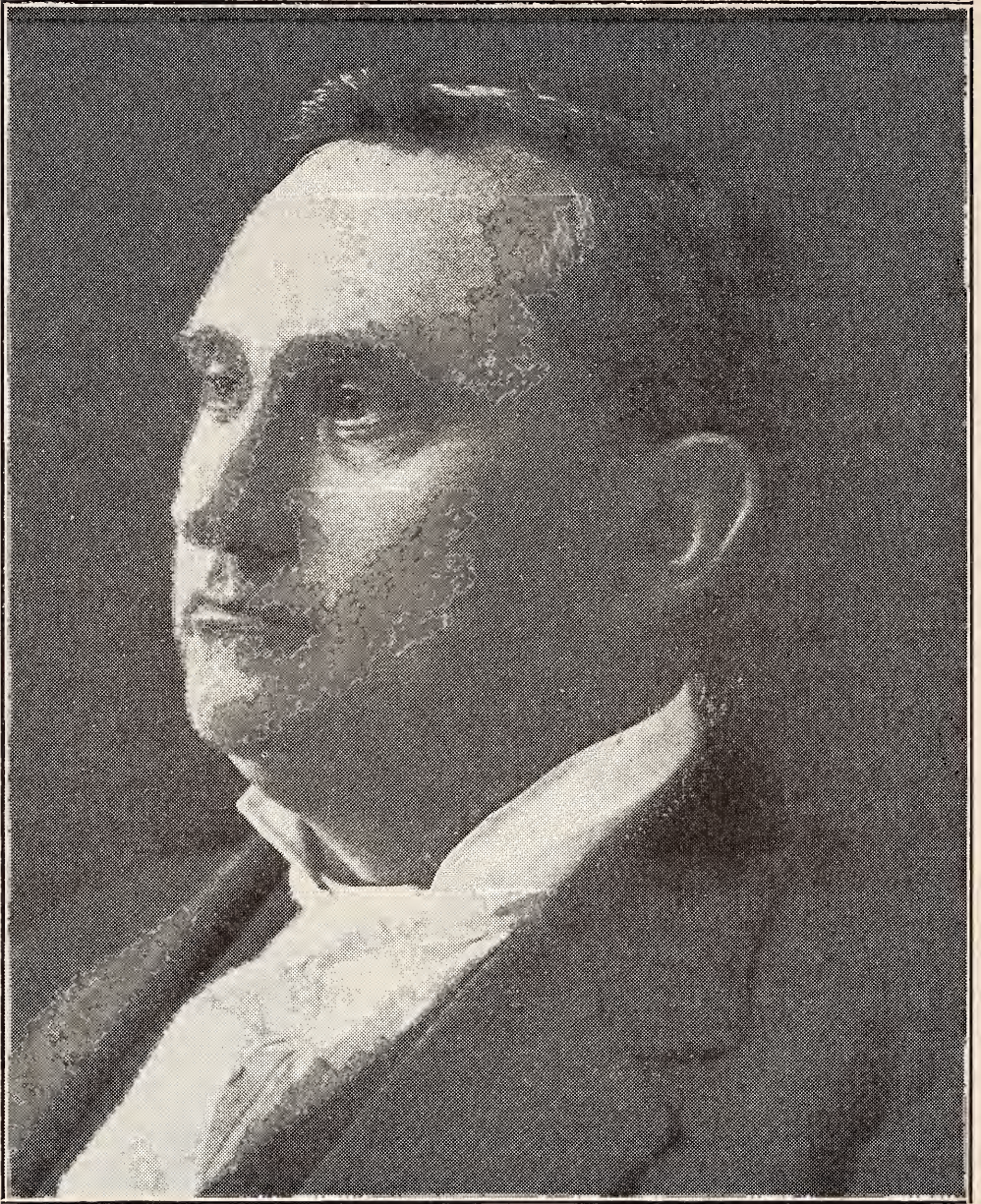
The entire business center of Houston was thus destroyed in less than two years' time. Yet the old trading post, near old Long Bridge, on Preston street, was safe, as were several stores on lower Franklin and on Commerce street.

During the war, fires were numerous, none of special consequence save destruction of cotton. Three-fourths of the fires in this stormy period were caused by kerosene oil lamps—the only means of furnishing light aside from the old tallow candle.

It was in 1866 that the Houston Gas Light Company was organized, and gas in large measure supplanted kerosene for house and street lighting, and also reduced to a minimum the dangers of fires commonly caused by oil.

The Kelly House, a two-story frame hotel at the corner of Congress and Milam streets, was burned in 1867.

In 1868 a cotton fire occurred on Franklin near San Jacinto street; 825 bales burned.



**W. H. (BOLEYN) LLOYD.**

W. H. Lloyd, the subject of this sketch, was born in Houston November 13, 1870. He was foreman of Alamo No. 8 in the volunteer service, and his friends named him "Boleyn." Today Mr. Lloyd is president of the Lloyd Metal Company and castings made by his foundry are all over Southwest Texas. The lumber business also calls for a portion of his attention. He has always taken an active part in public affairs and his practical and conservative ideas were recognized by the people several years ago when they elected him County Commissioner of Precinct No. 1, Harris County, which office he now creditably fills. His progressiveness and watchful interest in the affairs of the entire county have made him a popular official.

From 1871 to 1874 numerous fires occurred, principally in the business district, and several of them were of a nature that caused common talk of incendiarism. Business failures, too, were of frequent occurrence, and wholesale creditors and insurance companies suffered to quite a heavy amount.

Practically every business house had an underground cistern in the court or rear yard.

With the election of William Williams as chief in 1874, a record of fires was inaugurated, together with origin, loss and insurance.

With the first celebration of San Jacinto Day (April 21, 1875) by the Houston Fire Department, when the guests were the firemen of Galveston, Hempstead, Navasota and other towns near by, Johnny Meagher's boarding house, on the hill north of where the Magnolia Brewery now stands, burned to the ground, with the loss of three lives—two men (section hands) and a negro woman cook.

On August 7, 1875, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the City Mills, a cotton factory located in the Second ward, was discovered in flames. Exceedingly rainy weather had made the roads and streets quite impassable, and it was a half hour before the alarm reached the city. The Department arrived at the scene in time to see the walls fall. The loss was estimated at \$200,000.

At 6 p. m. on this date, according to the diary of Capt. E. W. Taylor, a severe rain and wind storm swept over the city, and it was noon the following day before the engines were replaced in their stations.

On July 8, 1876, at 4:30 p. m., the hottest fire the Department ever had to contend with was the burning of the big market and opera house on Market Square. The building contained one of the best and most perfectly appointed opera houses in the South, and cost \$400,000, covering almost the east half of the block. This building was constructed in 1871-2 under the Tim Scanlan administration, and since a "market-house," almost a replica of the former structure, was rebuilt for about \$84,000, charges of political graft and stealage in construction of the former building were com-

**FRED M. SOLAND.**

Coming to Houston in 1886 from New Orleans, where he was identified with both fire and military companies, F. M. Soland at once entered the active game here, joining the Light Guard and Curtin No. 9. He participated in two prize drills of the famous Guard and served with No. 9 until the close of its volunteer career. He was president of the Curtins for several years, and the picture shows him as company marshal in the parade of 1890. Mr. Soland is still hale and hearty and in the service of the postoffice department in Houston.

**ABRAM LEVY.**

Abe Levy, head of the big Levy Bros. Dry Goods Company today, and prominent in Jewish society and business circles, was a member of Washington Steamer Company No. 8, which had a most remarkable career as a volunteer company. He was alert and daring and made a splendid record as a volunteer.

mon. Let it be remembered that when the building was rebuilt, the fine opera house was omitted, the firm old foundation of the former structure was utilized, and minor useless but costly nooks and corners were left out; so there could not have been such an enormous amount of stealage by the Scanlan (Republican) administration when the Market-Opera House was given the people. The charge of incendiarism in connection with this fire has never been successfully denied. William Brady was the contractor, Bob Boyce and William Fleig the superintendents.

In 1877 Houston had some good and well-appearing business houses, none, however, more than four stories in height, on Main street between Congress and Preston. Fire originating in the show rooms of the Mendenhall Carriage Company, midway between Main and Fannin, on Congress, wiped out the entire half block on Main street, extending to Henry Fox's bank, at the corner of Preston. On the east side of this block was Gray's opera house (at present the Prince), and much of the credit for saving it and the other buildings on the Fannin street side is due the Galveston firemen, who came by special fast train, with a hose cart and steamer, in answer to a call for help.

In 1876 the Germania House, a second-rate hotel, was destroyed. An aged shoemaker named Schultz was unable to escape and was cremated.

A fire, and probable murder, occurred on July 4, 1878, that baffled the wits of the firemen and detectives. Old man Hodson lived in a two-story frame building on Washington street, near Glenwood cemetery, his business being contracting on a small scale. The firemen were at a picnic and failed to reach the scene until the building was almost wholly enveloped in flames. Search was made for Mr. Hodson, who lived in an upstairs back room, and his headless body was found and brought out. No trace of the human head has ever been found.

On July 9, 1879, Sam Roos' store, corner Main and Congress, was in blaze at 8:30 p. m., and so intense was the heat that by 9:30 everything was in ashes as far south as Conklin's drug store—five stores having been consumed

**R. H. CABANISS.**

For a period of 70 years Rudolph H. Cabaniss has been identified with the social, civil and business interests of Houston. When a younger man all matters for public good received the endorsement and personal support of Mr. Cabaniss, and much of the success of the old Volksfest Association and the pleasures it afforded was due to the untiring energy of this old patriot. His firemanic connection was with Protection No. 1 for many years. He was office manager for the extensive interests of T. W. House, Sr., for 48 years. Mr. Cabaniss is in his 83d year and enjoying good health.

**JOHN G. McKEEVER.**

John G. McKeever was foreman of Alamo No. 8, composed of ambitious boys of Houston's best families. Mr. McKeever was also a member of the famous Houston Light Guard, and Company I, First Regiment, T. N. G., and served as aide-de-camp to the brigadier general of the Second Brigade.

**JOHN RUDERSDORF.**

Never belonged to a fire company; joined almost everything else that had its inception here for the past 40 years. His first appearance in public was as torch bearer in the first merchants' parade back in the '70s. He was known around all the fire engine houses and was a worker at every fire—a plain volunteer. Mr. Rudersdorf is in the contracting business, a man of character and integrity, and in affiliation with several benevolent and secret orders.

**OSCAR E. REYNAUD.**

In the bygone days of the volunteer firemen, Oscar Reynaud was a member of Eagle No. 7—one of the charter members. Later in life he was appointed clerk of the criminal district court of Harris County, serving from 1898 to 1906. He descends from an old and influential family in the early days and is one of the best known men in the county. Mr. Reynaud is in the real estate business, with office in the First National Bank building.

with their contents in one hour. It was this fire that threatened the new Frank Dunn building, which stood behind Roos', but facing on Congress street, which was saved by Stonewall No. 3, for which service Mr. Dunn gave the Department \$500 for the monument fund.

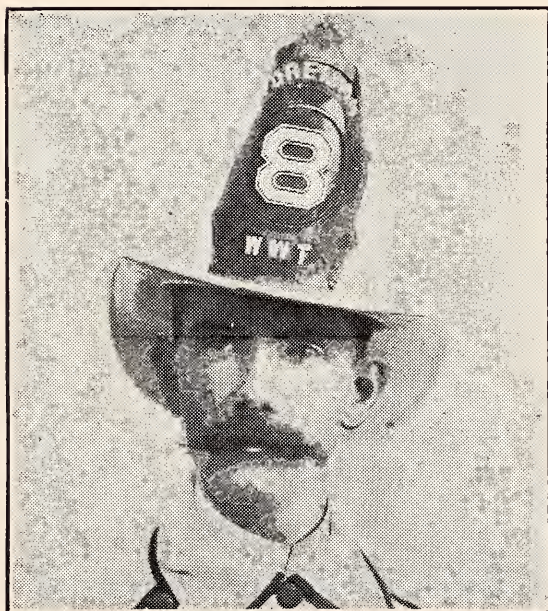
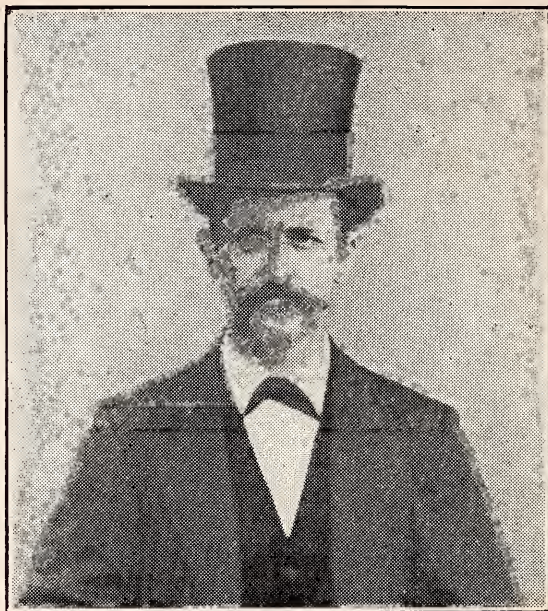
The west side of Main street between Congress and Preston was burned out in June, 1879, the fire originating in Joe Forster's barber shop, on Congress street, at the rear of George Gregor's Bank Saloon. The city administration on November 30, 1878, entered into a contract with J. M. Loweree and associates to supply the city with water. The system was finally completed in July, 1879. Frank Smith was superintendent for the contractors and intended to make a test of the new system on June 23. But on the 22nd of June the blaze at issue prompted him to fire up his furnaces and put the two duplex high pressure Worthington pumps at work, with which the plant was equipped. The test was very satisfactory for fire purposes, but as the water was pumped from Buffalo Bayou and became muddy after a fire, it was unfit at such times for domestic use.

The latter part of 1879 the west side of Main street between Preston and Prairie, known as Perkins' Row, was lined with wooden shacks from what is now the United States tea and coffee store to the present Lumbermans bank. In about the center of the row stood Beavens' book store where the fourth fire of the '70s took its start. Not even our modern apparatus would have aided much in checking a fire in such a place as that. The old dry wood fed it as far as Preston and only scientific fire fighting prevented it from jumping the street. In the other direction it worked as far as Dr. Roberts' residence on the site of the present bank, where it was checked. The building of Dr. Roberts was the first two-story frame constructed in Houston, built for A. Briscoe, one of the pioneers.

In 1881 another peculiar fire occurred near the Bayou City Compress, in which a man named Carmichael was found dead across a stove. The building was not entirely consumed. Cause of the fire and death were never determined.

**JOHN D. USENER.**

John D. Usener was the first white male child born in Houston, and as he progressed in manhood his worth as a citizen was recognized and in a measure rewarded. He represented the Third Ward in the City Council in 1874; was grand marshal for several years of the Volksfest celebrations of the German citizens; for years president and foreman of Protection No. 1 in the volunteer service; member of the wholesale firm of Usener & Dissen. Died August 9, 1895.

**W. W. THOMAS.**

William W. Thomas came to Houston in 1872 from Natchez, Miss., where he was born November 10, 1868. When a young man embarked in the real estate business, which he still follows. In 1894 organized Washington Steamer and Hose Company in the volunteer fire service. In 1900 was elected alderman from the Third ward, was chairman of the fire committee in that body, and during his two years term three splendid steamers were added to the Department. At No. 2 station is a steamer named in his honor, which is said to have seen more active service than any piece of apparatus belonging to the city.

December 3, 1882, witnessed the destruction of the International Compress, the finest in the South, with 8,000 bales of cotton, entailing a loss of about \$500,000. The water mains burst in two places and the firemen were helpless. Galveston was appealed to for help and sent two steamers.

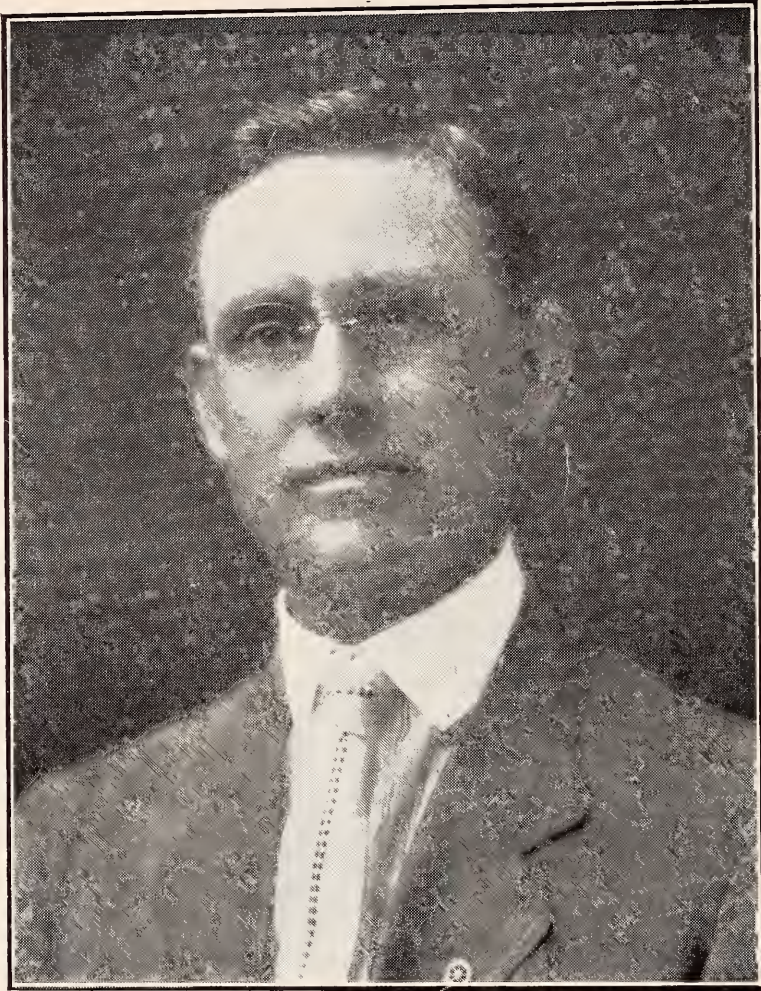
In 1883 the Fifth Ward Hotel, a frame building, was lost while W. H. Coyle was chief. The chief and three men were caught when the front wall collapsed. One of the men died a month later from injuries received. Chief Coyle always carried the injury received in this fire.

Bell's Variety Show, commonly called "Bucket of Blood," burned in 1886. This fire threatened for a time the entire business district. Pillot's opera house was on the corner now occupied by the Houston National Exchange Bank, and a children's matinee was billed for the same afternoon. Luckily, the doors had not opened, and it is possible a terrible holocaust was averted.

Cleveland's warehouse, a four-story building near the foot of Main street, was destroyed in 1889. Loss, \$40,000.

Within the past fifteen years the Fifth ward has had three disastrous conflagrations. The first, in 1891, started in the shaving shed of the Phoenix Lumber Company, on Providence street, licking up block after block of cottages and small stores. There were no steam engines in the Department, hose reels and a couple of small hand pump engines having to combat the fierce flames. Spreading from Providence to Maffitt street, the fire kept on in its mad career, taking several lumber yards, homes and stores. Galveston was again appealed to for help, but as the water mains became clogged with sand little could be done to stop the havoc. At Gribble's dry kiln the efforts of the firemen mastered the fiery element. Loss placed at \$500,000.

The St. Joseph's Infirmary fire, on Franklin street, in 1894, in which two Sisters of Charity lost their lives trying to save others, still brings sad recollections to those who knew of the sacrifices the Sisters made for those under their care. A block of boarding and rooming houses and private dwellings also was destroyed.



**CHAS. W. HURLEY.**

Charlie Hurley was of Washington No. 8, and one of the youngest members. He is a young man even today, and has been out of the volunteer fire service twenty years. Manager of the Texas Mercantile Agency and secretary of the Retail Merchants' Association of Houston. An authority on matters of credit and popular in business and social circles.

In 1895 a block of dwelling houses in Jackson street, back of the Church of the Annunciation, was consumed, with the loss of one life. The victim was a woman whose clothing caught fire while she was bending over a cook stove. In a frenzy she rushed from house to house, leaving a trail of fire behind her as she went. At the last house in the block a man seized her and wrapped a rug about her. She died on the way to the hospital.

The year 1897 saw more human life go by flame. Ruppersberg's stables, at Milam and Capitol, were destroyed and four were cremated in the blaze. The rooms above the stable were occupied by a Salvation Army officer, his wife and two children. Their presence in the burning building was not suspected until their bodies were found in the embers.

On June 9, 1898, a fire which started at the corner of McIlhenny and San Jacinto devoured its way around three sides of the block, taking seven houses and stables. The course of the blaze was checked in a dwelling on the corner of Fannin and McIlhenny. The loss was placed at \$33,000.

The Merchants and Planters' Oil Mill fire occurred in 1900. This was a fierce blaze and many firemen succumbed to the intense heat. The Department lost a thousand feet of new hose, the firemen being forced to abandon it to save their lives.

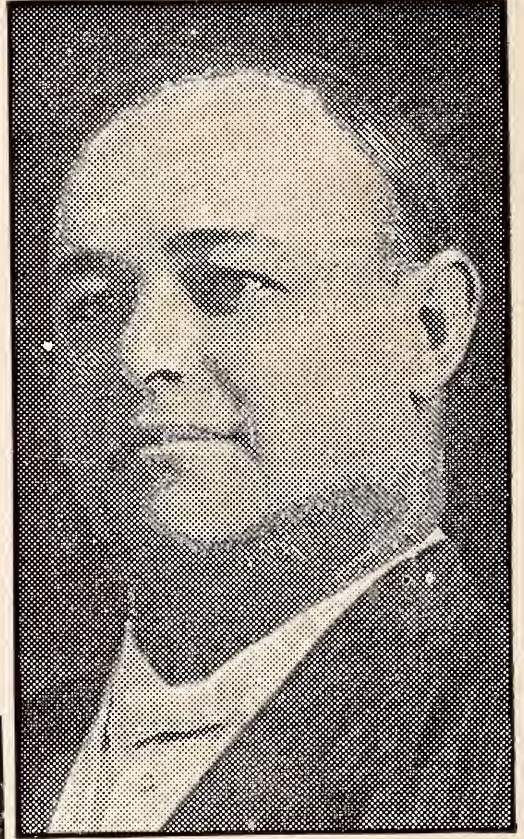
June 21, 1901, saw the Inman Compress go up in smoke. The efficient work of the Department saved a warehouse containing 400 bales of cotton. The loss was placed at \$120,000.

Again Houston's big market house was reduced to ashes on June 24, 1901. Loss about \$84,000. This fire was caused by sparks from a tinner's furnace.

One of the oldest hostelries in Texas, and one with considerable war history attached to it, was the Hutchins House, a mammoth brick building which stood on Franklin street where the Southern Pacific office building now stands. Fire destroyed it during the latter part of 1901. Loss about \$100,000.

**GUS DREYLING.**

Gus Dreyling is strictly a Houston product of manhood, and is president of the big Model Laundry. When a boy he assisted in organizing the junior Hook and Ladder Company—E. L. Coombs, a wealthy citizen, gave them a staunch little truck equipped with ladders, buckets and spikes, and they were the proudest unit in the volunteer service. Mr. Dreyling was president of the juniors. He later joined Hook and Ladder No. 1 and remained with it till the end of the volunteer day.

**JULES HIRSCH.**

Any history of Houston would be incomplete without mention of Jules Hirsch. He was one of the most active men in city affairs when Houston was building, and today is a heavy taxpayer and prominent in financial circles. Mr. Hirsch was a merchant, a city alderman, city assessor and collector, county commissioner, and at one time only a few votes prevented him becoming mayor when Houston was politically red hot. He was a member of Washington No. 8 and answered roll call with consistent regularity.

In 1903 a train of cotton was destroyed in the yards of the Houston & Texas Central Railroad, together with a number of box and flat cars.

November, 1906, six dwellings, a store, skating rink, blacksmith shop and school were destroyed on Clark street, Fifth ward.

The second big Fifth ward fire occurred on September 2, 1906. It started in the offices of the Standard Milling Company at Maffitt and Conti, took the whole block occupied by the company between Maffitt, Conti, Providence and Semmes. Then it jumped the street and took a row of cottages on the east side of Semmes and the point between Odin and Conti. Working eastward it consumed all the buildings on the south side of Conti, turned at Mary and started west on Providence. At the corner of Providence and Semmes it was stopped.

The year 1912 was the most violent fire-loss year in Houston. Three disastrous conflagrations occurred. The first was on January 6, when the Industrial Cotton Oil Mill was burned on the north side in the Sixth ward. The blaze started at 10:30 a. m., about the center of the plant and spread with great rapidity, water having no effect upon the oil-saturated buildings and contents. The gallant firemen never toiled harder to master the fire element, and several of them sustained serious injuries, while many were rendered hors du combat by heat and smoke. The loss was about \$1,000,000. In this conflagration the Department lost several hundred feet of hose, the firemen having to run for their lives as the wind shifted, and it was miraculous that scores of them were not incinerated.

The most disastrous and greatest fire in every particular that Houston ever had occurred on February 21, 1912, when an area seven blocks wide and one and a half miles long was laid waste in the Fifth ward. The cause of the fire has never been learned, but the place of origin and the time of day lead to the conclusion that it was the result of the carelessness of tramps in an old wooden building at the corner of Hardy and Opelousas streets at 12:30 p. m. The Department was handicapped by a stiff north wind and its early



**TONY ARMBRUSTER.**

Tony Armbruster is one of Houston's busy men today, being proprietor of Armbruster's Penny Laundry, with offices scattered throughout the business district. "Shirts done up while you wait" would be a good motto for Armbruster, for he is as quick with his orders now as he was to obey orders when as a kid he belonged to Little Six, a company of boys who took over the old hand pump of Mechanic 6 when they bought the new Bolton engine.

Mr. Armbruster is still a young man and active in assisting in Houston's growth.

efforts were futile against the raging flames. Galveston furnished valuable assistance with some of its apparatus. A conservative estimate of the total loss was placed at \$3,500,000, and the scope of destruction included 1 church, 1 school, 13 industrial plants, 8 stores, 29 two-story dwellings, 90 frame cottages, 116 box cars, 9 oil tank cars and 39,800 bales of cotton.

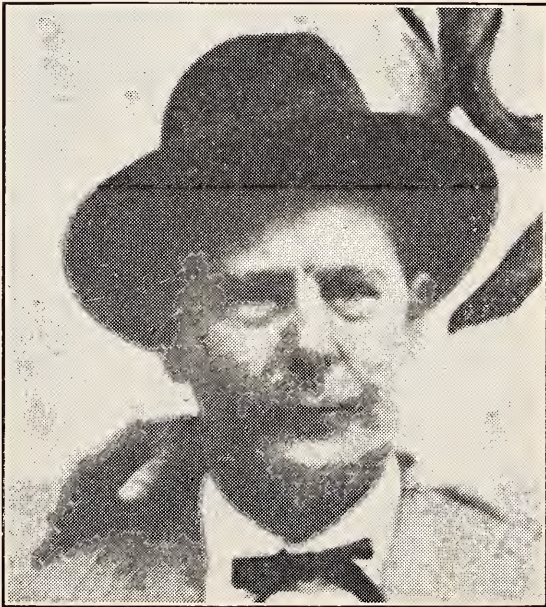
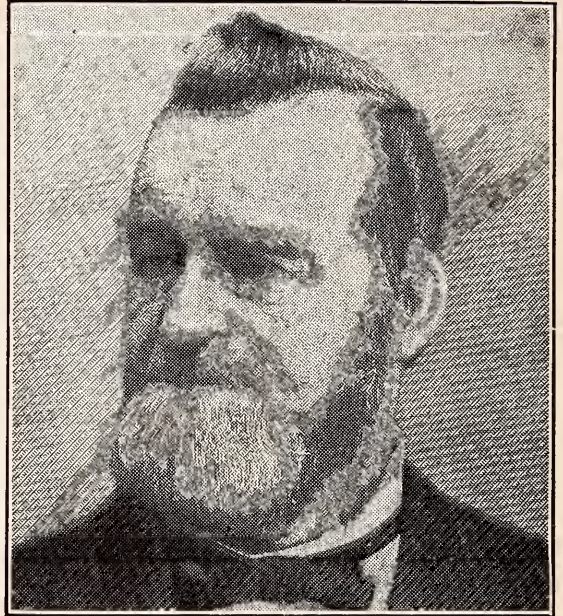
At 4 a. m. on May 19, 1912, fire broke out in the big Stowers furniture store, corner of Main street and Capitol avenue, and on account of the combustible material upon which it had to feed at once gave the Department another strenuous contest to save the business section. A dire calamity seemed inevitable and Galveston was again appealed to for assistance, which was readily furnished. Four large business and office buildings with their contents were destroyed and a number of others considerably damaged. The loss by this fire totaled \$1,000,000.

No conflagrations have since occurred, and extensive additions to the equipment in recent years have made of the Houston Fire Department one of the most perfect in the South.

For the current year to March 1, 1916, statistics show the number of men in the Department, 148; average population to each fireman, 878; area of city in square miles, 32; firemen per square mile, 4.6; appropriation, \$171,610; cost per capita, \$1.32; cost per square mile served, \$5363.

**J. R. MORRIS.**

Joseph R. Morris held membership as an active fireman in Protection No. 1 in the '60s. In 1868 Mr. Morris was Mayor of Houston, and in that year personally planted the trees that now adorn the corners of court house square. He was one of the framers of the Texas homestead law and supported Hon. Charles Stewart in his active endeavors for its passage. It is said the Morris iron front on Main street was the first four-story building erected in Texas. He was a prominent citizen and business man.

**GUSTAV W. OTTO.**

"Willie" Otto, as he is familiarly known, was a member of Eagle No. 7 and afterward of Levy No. 8, named after Dad Levy, so well known among fire fighters. Mr. Otto was of the younger generation, but was one who made a clean and efficient record in the Volunteer Department. He has seen much service in various efforts made in the past to attain a big city and today feels that his efforts in a measure have been rewarded. Mr. Otto is a merchant on San Felipe street and enjoys the full vigor of a well spent life.

## Houston's Old Fire Bell.

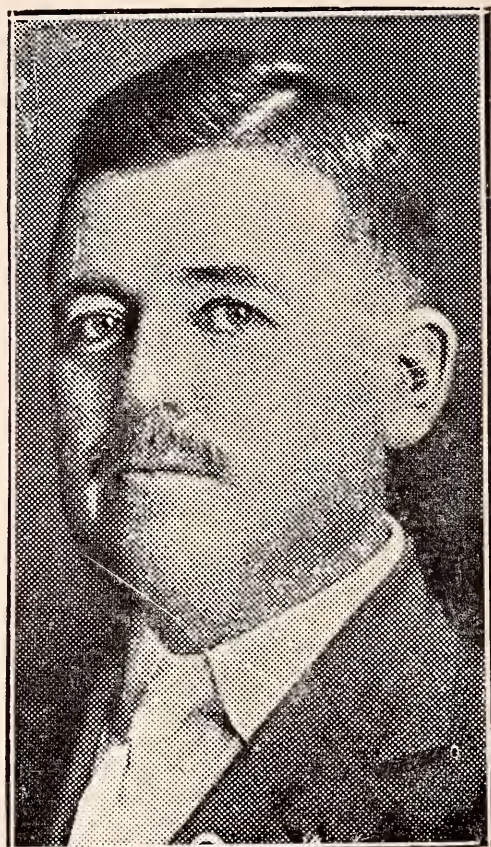
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When Houston's \$400,000 City Hall was destroyed by fire July 8, 1876, an old bell that hung in the south tower was rendered unfit for service. It had sounded the hours by day and by night, had rung out dread alarms of fire and calls for a quick assembling of the people, and had tolled requiems for the repose of the souls of departed personages, for years. Its remains were boxed and shipped away to be used in recasting a larger and finer-toned bell, which today designates the hours as told by the faces of the clock that look north, east, south and west from the tall tower. This new bell was cast in 1876, and bears the inscription in embossed letters: "Cast by A. Fulton's Son & Co., Pittsburgh, Pa., A. D. 1876—Houston City Fire Department, Texas." It no longer tells of fires, however, for the present city administration decided it was useless and confusing noise a year ago.

After the close of the Civil War, when the town was full of Confederates and Federals, newly freed negroes and degraded white men whose sole purpose in living seemed to be to create strife between the races, the former bell carried a secret message when it sounded seven taps after a short and quick alarm. Those seven taps were for the seven words embraced in the sentence: "Bring your guns along with you, boys!" The Ku Klux Klan, whose strange and weird ceremonies were puzzling and corrective methods for malefactions the South had to endure after General Lee's surrender, had members in all walks of life in Houston, as well as throughout the entire southern section of the country. No man with Confederate blood in his veins was ever asked to join the Klan, and still scores were sworn in so fast that the organization became a terror to evildoers. The old bell was a part of the Klan in Houston.

**THOMAS KEHOE.**

Rescue No. 7 was one of the junior companies in volunteer days and showed a spirit of chivalry that gave them place on the honor roll of firemanic history. Tom Kehoe, one of the busiest busy men in Houston's commercial affairs and member of the Nelms-Kehoe Dock Company, was a member of Rescue No. 7, and remained in the service until "all but him had fled."

**CHRISTIAN F. KOEHLER.**

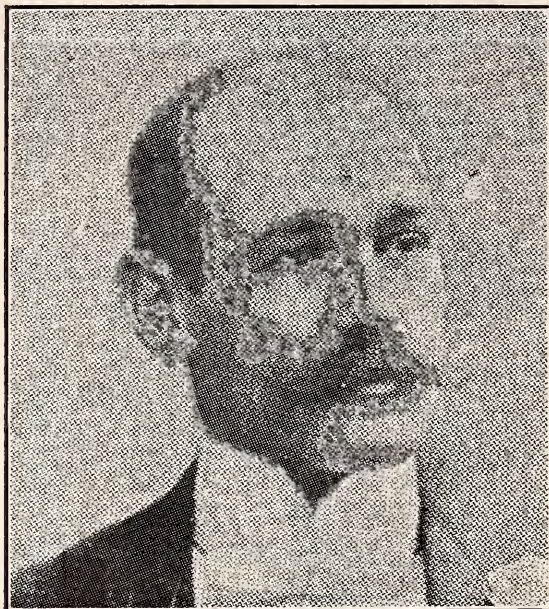
One of the younger firemen in the volunteer service was C. F. Koehler. He enjoyed the game of putting out fires. Today Mr. Koehler is proprietor of "Koehler's," a landmark of Houston for more than half a century, and one of the most complete toy and racket stores in the country. He is strictly a self-made man and his success in life is attributable solely to himself.

## Houston's Water Supply.

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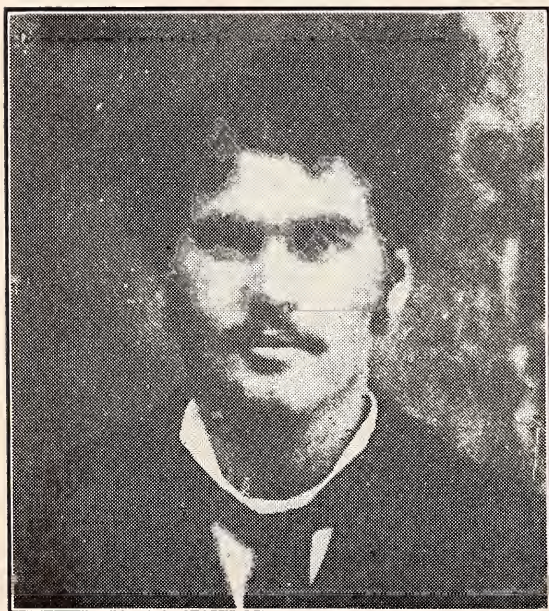
**H**OUSTON'S water supply is obtained from 66 wells (about 26 of which are inactive) from 900 to 1100 feet deep, and fires are extinguished with the same pure quality of water that the inhabitants drink—the extreme opposite to the conditions of 35 years ago and later, when Buffalo Bayou supplied water for all purposes. Then the quality was bad at best, but after a fire, or after the pressure had been put on the mains, it was unfit for cattle, mules or swine. Sand and mud often so filled the mains that water would not flow and firemen and apparatus were useless in the face of the fire demon. The demand for a pure water supply became so urgent that tests (1888) found abundant artesian water at comparative shallow depth, and for a while artesian and bayou water were the ingredients for domestic use and fire purposes. Finally the bayou ceased to be a source of supply and artesian wells have furnished water for all purposes for several years. It is not an impossibility for some or all of these wells to fail to produce, or become so deficient in production as to cause a water famine among the 135,000 souls comprising Houston's population. The city purchased the water works from private owners in 1906.

Prior to 1901 the various wells produced sufficient quantities of water to permit of their direct connection with the pumps, but a later increased demand and a gradual diminished supply, the latter caused by sand clogging the strainers, thus impeding the natural flow of the wells, required the installation of air compressors. It was necessary to build collecting tanks in connection with these machines in order to have on hand a surplus of water to be drawn from through suction pipes. These tanks are approximately 18 feet above mean water level in Buffalo Bayou. The total annual pumpage of the water works system is 1,981,480,800 gallons, for all purposes.



**DR. SYDNEY J. SMITH.**

Sydney Smith heeded opportunity's offering in the early days of his life, and came through with distinction. As a young man he united with every good movement to improve himself and the city of his adoption. As a student of surgery and medicine he scored success. As a member of the State Militia he helped the Houston Light Guard win renown. As a volunteer fireman and member of Eagle No. 7, he gave his personal effort. Dr. Sydney J. Smith graduated in medicine in 1899 and today is an esteemed practitioner of Houston.



**THEO. J. PEREIRA**

First Foreman of Mechanic No. 6



**FRED GERDES**

Member of Old and New Departments

Water Commissioner Fitzgerald proposes that the city create a high pressure fire system, independent of the domestic water supply, and points out that the principal advantages to be derived will be reduced insurance key rate, increased working pressure and the saving of hundreds of millions of gallons of artesian water.

Chief Siebert, on the same subject, urges the construction of a modern high pressure water system for fire purposes in the business districts of the city. Such a system is in use in not only all the large cities of the country, but in several in Texas. It is radically wrong, he says, to continue to fight fires with a combined fire and domestic system, such as in use here. A high pressure system of this nature in use in Houston would greatly alleviate the danger of a conflagration hazard here, which is ever existent under present conditions.

The net cost of the water works system at the end of 1914 was \$1,621,679.04.

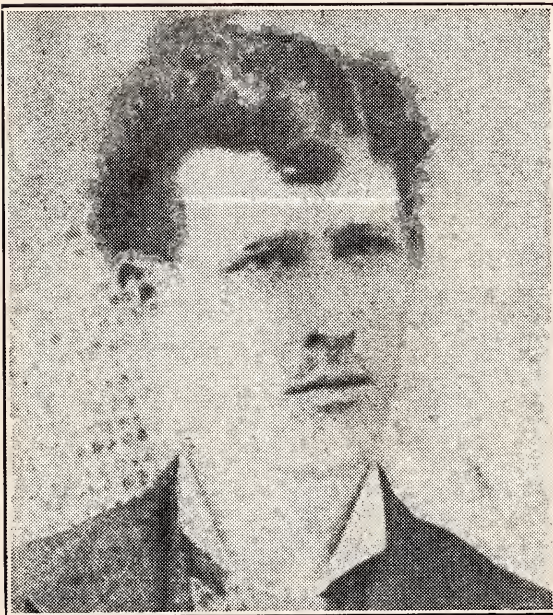
There are 120 miles of water mains in the city, with 993 fire hydrants.

During 1915 an auxiliary plant to the main system was authorized to be located on the city's 53 acres at Highland Park, to consist of three wells and pumping station, providing 9,000,000 gallons daily for consumption and assuring adequate water for domestic purposes and fire protection.

The water from the North Main Street plant will be forced into the city mains by the pumping plant of the station and will add pressure and supply to the amount sent out from the present plant. The plans for the North Main Street plant include the three wells, to be pumped by electrically driven apparatus, a concrete settling tank for final purification of the water, a pumping plant to send the water into the city mains.

**INGHAM S. ROBERTS.**

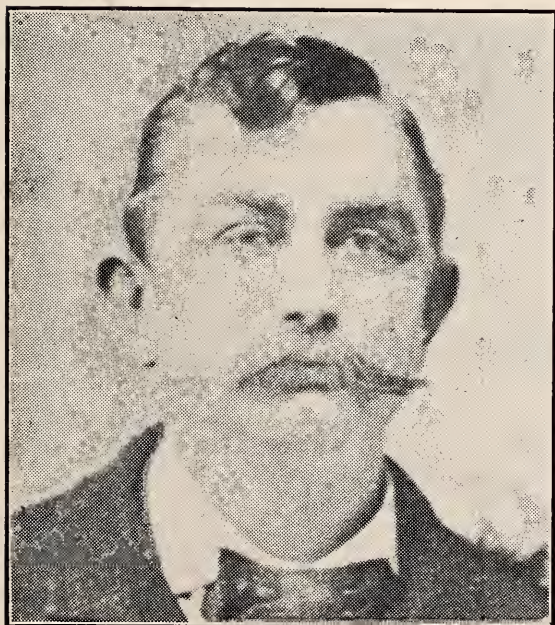
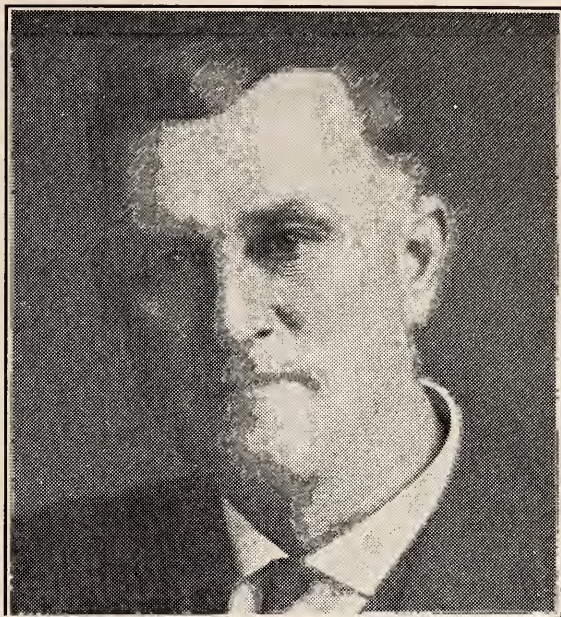
Son of an old time and worthy citizen of Houston, Henry P. Roberts, who for seven years was president of Hook and Ladder Company No. 1, and prominent in business affairs. Ingham Roberts is a practicing attorney and is said to have more ancient local and state historical data in his keeping than any other man. He was a charter member and trustee of Washington No. 8 in volunteer days, and for a time was chairman of the Houston Democratic executive committee.

**JOHN HENRY BROWN.**

John H. Brown is an original member of Mechanic No. 6 and served several years as an active. When Theo Pereira was foreman Mr. Brown was first assistant representing the juniors of the organization. On account of his residence being remote from the engine house Mr. Brown found it very inconvenient to remain on the active list and resigned. He, however, continued to serve in the volunteer service. Mr. Brown is rated as an old-timer and recites with pleasure his experiences of the past. He is foreman of the composing room of Cumming & Sons, Printers, in Houston.

**CHAS. EISEMANN.**

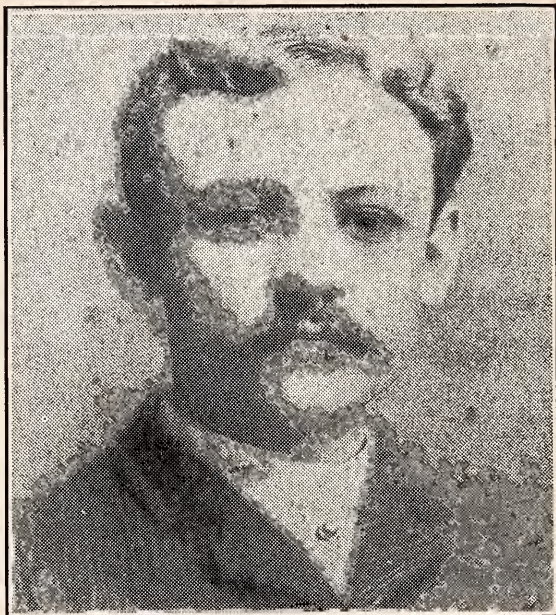
Saw service in Seibert No. 10; which he assisted in organizing, also No. 1 Protection Company, and remained in the volunteer ranks until mustered out to give way to the paid Department. Mr. Eisemann is still a young man and active in pursuit of his trade—tinner and cornice worker at No. 418 Dowling street. "Chas. Eisemann, the Tinner," is his name—the name that everybody gives him on account of his perfect mastery of the sheet metal business.

**SAM BONGIO.**

Sam Bongio held membership in Stonewall No. 3. He was active in public affairs and a prominent factor in business circles, having an establishment on Preston Street opposite Market Square. Mr. Bongio had many staunch friends, and as a fireman won laurels for bravery. He married in Houston and when death called him in 1906 he left a small and interesting family, three of his sons being in the grocery business on German Street, one living at Fort Worth, and a daughter, Mrs. D. G. Gauroino.

**ALEX HAIL.**

For several years Alex Hail was treasurer and active member of Stonewall No. 3, until a year previous to the paid Department, when the offices of secretary and treasurer were merged. Mr. Hail was in business during his firemanic career but responded to every call of fire. He is at present connected with the F. W. Heitmann Company in the sales department. Born in Houston, he has the esteem and respect of all.

**JOHN DONNELLY.**

Foreman of Curtin No. 9 nine years and engineer of No. 5 steamer for a long time. Saw service as a volunteer fireman and in the paid service, under Chiefs Parker, Martin, Arto, Hussey, O'Leary and Ollre, and knows the game of fire fighting. Sustained a broken leg at Bell's variety show fire by a falling wall.

## City Firemen's Union.

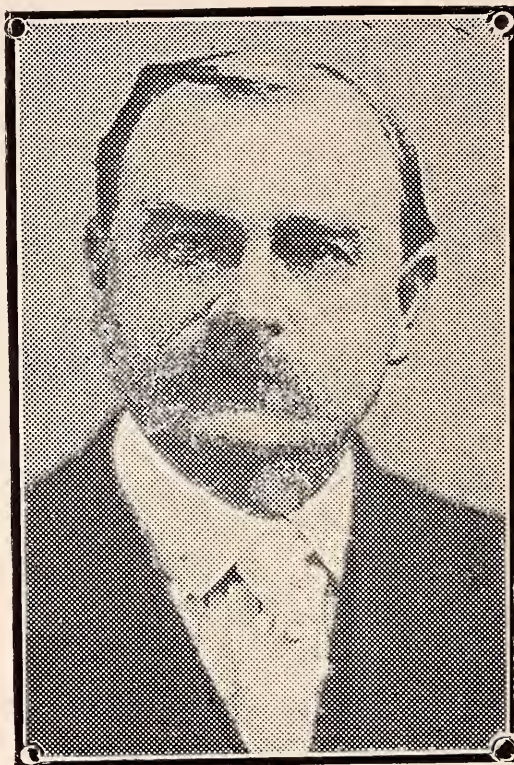
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A good movement originated on March 5, 1902, when the City Firemen's Union was organized. It was composed of about 65 members of the Department, and had affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, with serial number 9629. The organization was ostensibly for caring for the sick and wounded, but in reality was to secure better results and work in more perfect harmony as a combination of employes for the protection of the homes and lives of the people; to exchange ideas and discuss measures conducive to a better, safer and more effective means of bringing the whole Department to a higher state of efficiency. The funds to sustain the union were to be derived from membership dues and contributions of friends. Soon the treasury began to show signs of prosperity, and by majority vote the organization was turned into a loan association, with little or no security demanded. Borrowers had been plentiful and the exchequer was at low ebb when a rumor was circulated that the administration was adverse to a labor union in the Fire Department. Only seven members were required for a quorum to transact business, but after the rumor became general all efforts to convene a meeting were fruitless, and the Firemen's Union became extinct. One poor unfortunate, however, was caught in the mesh, and the real estate he hypothecated for a loan came very near getting a cloudy title. After the collapse of the union he was compelled to secure a release from every individual who had been connected with it in order to preserve intact his ownership. These releases are on record at the county court house, each attested by a notary public. The first set of officers comprised: Thos. H. Martin, president; D. C. King, vice president; R. L. Rast, secretary; W. E. Franks, treasurer.

When the union went out of existence (1908) the officers were: D. C. King, president; R. R. Glass, vice president; Fred Gerdes, secretary; W. E. Franks, treasurer.

**FIRE COMMISSIONER W. J. KOHLHAUFF.**

When Houston was governed by aldermen representing wards, W. J. Kohlhauff, of the First Ward, was chairman of the Fire Committee in the City Council. It was then that a bigger and better Department was decided upon, and Mr. Kohlhauff put forth his best energies to the desired improvement. When the commission form of government went into effect Commissioner Kohlhauff was placed in entire charge of the Department. New apparatus and the improved methods of fire fighters and fire prevention were inaugurated by him, and the Department started on its upward growth to perfection and the attainment of an efficiency that made it equal to the rapid growth of the city.

**WILLIAM H. COLBY.**

"Little Six" was composed of juniors who emulated Mechanic No. 6 and did splendid service with a small pumper. Will Colby was in its membership, and served as first assistant foreman during the two years of the company's existence. Mr. Colby was born and reared in Houston and has a knowledge of conditions that has proved a splendid asset in the conduct of his real estate business.

# Stories of the Volunteers.

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## LOST THE FIREBOX.

One time Chief Jim Gillaspie was outdone for good. When the Southern Pacific passenger depot in the Fifth Ward began to burn Chief Gillaspie thought he could handle the blaze with the companies in the ward, without calling upon the apparatus in the city proper, but the chief soon saw that the flames were creeping beyond the control of ordinary water pressure. He sent in an emergency call for the steamer, Liberty No. 2. Winter was on in full force, and mud covered the roads and streets, and it was decidedly an apparent impossibility for the steamer to reach the fire. But Gillaspie took the risk, feeling that the Liberty company would be on hand if human power could get them there. His confidence was not misplaced. A short time later the steamer hove into sight. Lads were hanging from every corner of it, ready to lend a hand. But there wasn't a wisp of smoke coming from the stack. Some place along the highway the grate bars had been jolted loose and the huge machine was useless.

## BOB BOYD'S LEGLESS HOSEMAN.

First Assistant Chief Bob Boyd tells a story of a legless wonder who used to put up at No. 3's house—a good but unlucky railroad man named Bob Campbell. Boyd was driver of the reel, and never turned away a lodger if there was room for another. Campbell had lost both legs in railroad service and was provided with a pair of cork legs.

On the night that Boyd speaks of he walked into the engine house about 3 a. m., took off his artificial limbs and sat down.

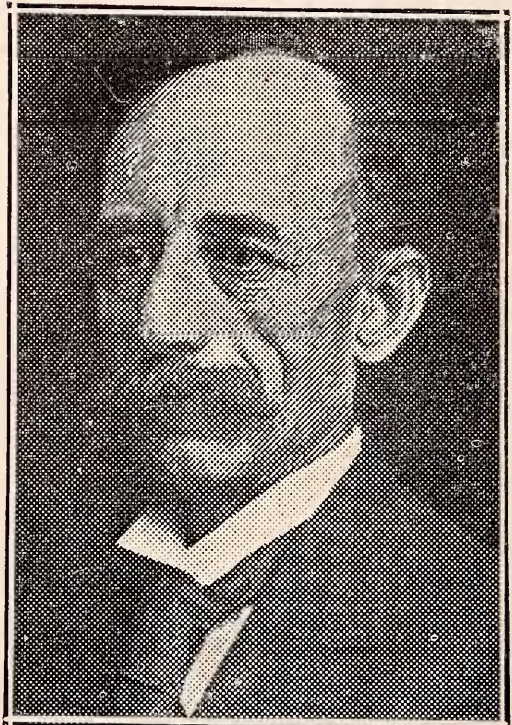
"We had been talking about ten minutes," Boyd tells it, "when the alarm rang for some place out in the woods near Dart and Houston avenue. I snapped the harness, heard some one hit the ground behind the reel and climb up

**BEN CAMPBELL.**

At the most interesting and important point in its history, Houston has a decidedly practical man at the head of municipal affairs. The city has grown big within fifteen years, and is getting larger as the days go by. Mayor Campbell does not attempt to personally supervise each department of city affairs, yet he is ex-officio head of all departments, and that they are being conducted to the best interests of all the people is evidenced in published reports from time to time of receipts and expenditures of the local government. Mayor Campbell favors an improved Fire Department as the best method of minimizing fire losses.

**JOSEPH J. PASTORIZA.**

Taxation has been a knotty problem for authorities to deal with ever since the beginning of time. Taxation caused the Revolutionary war, and taxation had a great deal to do with the cause of the civil war. Taxation is a bone of contention and will probably ever be. Joseph J. Pastoriza is Houston's Tax and Finance Commissioner, and to his efforts is mainly due the success of the fiduciary system of the city. He is a close student of taxation matters and a disciple of the great single taxer, Henry George. While the Somers system introduced by Commissioner Pastoriza seems to meet with some opposition, its ultimate benefit is a foregone conclusion. Joe Pastoriza was a volunteer fireman with Stonewall No. 3.



onto the gig, and I thought it was the other paid man. I never stopped to look behind.

"We made a neck-breaking run through the mud holes over there. When we came to the plug at Houston and Dart I yelled, 'There's your plug; fall off.' Then I turned around and saw, not the regular man, but Campbell down on his stomach in the mud with a reef of hose around his waist dragging himself to make the coupling. I never had a chance to slow up before he had one arm wrapped around the plug and his connection made."

### BRAVE HARRY HOFFMAN'S FEAT.

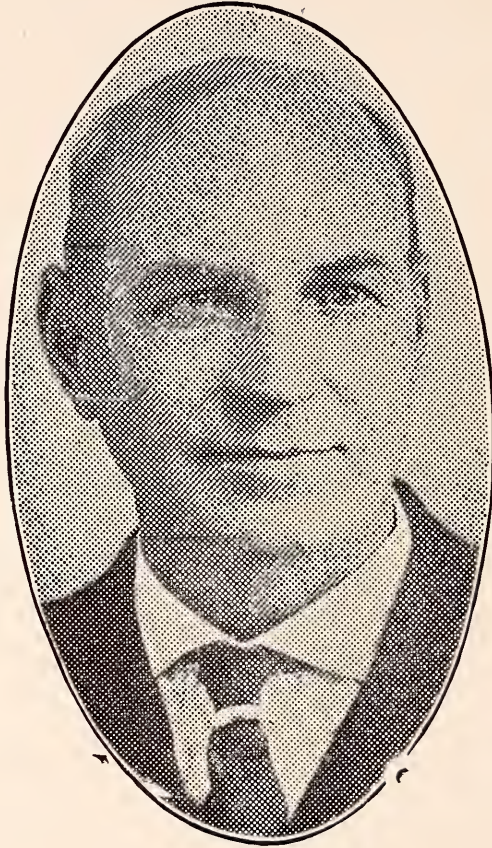
Harry Hoffman was a cripple and tillerman for Hook and Ladder No. 1. During the great mill fire in the Fifth Ward in 1891 the team attached to his truck ran away. The driver was taken off his guard and jolted out of his seat and Hoffman was left alone. Instead of jumping to safety and letting the truck careen on, endangering pedestrians, he stayed at the guide wheel and kept the wagon on an even keel until the team was forced to stop from exhaustion.

### BURNED FINE FIRE TRUCK.

The first Central Station was on the corner of San Jacinto and Prairie avenue, a wooden structure and completely out of harmony with the condition of the Department back in the early '80s. Henry Diggs and Jim Buckingham were members of the force at the station and concocted a scheme to get rid of the old house. Practical jokes and April-foolery were common in those days, and Diggs and Buckingham tried their scheme by applying five gallons of kerosene in behind the truck and near the feed bins. Then they sent in the alarm.

The department had scarcely turned out when the torch was applied and the smoke began to roll. In the house was a \$4500 truck, the property of the company, and when the flames had taken a good start the pair turned their attention toward rescuing it.

The floor was slanted and they had not figured on encountering any difficulty in getting the carriage out of the



**H. A. HALVERTON.**

**Official Head of the Houston Fire Department.**

The official head of the Houston Fire Department is Commissioner H. A. Halverton. Formerly an engineer on the Houston and Texas Central railroad from 1882 to 1898; embarked in the mercantile business on Washington street, which he now successfully conducts. Commissioner Halverton has spared no effort to perfect the Fire Department, and today it ranks among the most perfect in the country, with a low key rate of insurance and a feeling of safety among the people.

way. But a bale of hay which they had not noticed standing against the rear wheels of the truck, upset their calculations. At the first jerk it fell under the wheels and \$4500 worth of fancy truck went up in smoke along with the despised engine house.

A boy who had been identified with the conspiracy was a shop mate of Chief Parker. He found that the deed failed to fit right with his conscience. One day he called the chief aside and made a confession.

### HAPPENINGS ON VINEGAR HILL.

Vinegar Hill once comprised that strip of land lying between Washington County road (now Washington avenue) and Buffalo Bayou opposite the site of the Grand Central passenger station, extending east as far as Finnigan's hide house and west as far as Eighth street. It was a settlement of one- and two-room box-shaped, dilapidated structures, occupied by negro women and children, and scattered over the surface of the ground with no semblance of regularity or system, with no fences or dividing lines, no walks save narrow footpaths worn by the bare feet of the denizens as they visited from house to house. Of children there was plenty—some as black as ebony, some black and tan, others just a little shady, while some had real straight hair and olive complexions—of all sizes and shapes. There were 20 or 30 of these huts, housing probably half a hundred females and as many pickaninnies.

Caroline Riley was the Queen of Vinegar Hill. She possessed a higher degree of intelligence than the average of her race, was very cunning and treacherous, and paid more toll into the recorder's court than all the balance of the negroes of Houston combined, for infractions of the law. Fines and imprisonment were not deterrent factors to Caroline when her iniquitous brain was in working order. Revelries, with bad whiskey, trifling negro bucks and low-down white men, were the order six out of seven nights in the week. Saturday night was a prize occasion and debauchery ran riot. Every base deed known to criminology has been credited to Vinegar Hill, and Caroline Riley was always



**FIRE MARSHAL GEORGE WEAD.**

Houston's fire marshal, George Wead, is by trade a machinist and engineer, and when Tom O'Leary was chief of the Department Mr. Wead was assistant engineer at Central Station. Mayor Ben Campbell appointed him to the office of fire marshal, and Mr. Wead has proved a worthy selection. His keen eye and quick discernment stand him well in hand in conducting the business of his office, and he is a valuable asset to the present splendid Fire Department.

one of the arrested parties. The law had no terrors for her, but the Fire Department contained more ghosts, goblins, hoo-dooes and witches than Caroline dared face after she gained the disfavor of the firemen. It has never leaked out what overt and unpardonable act Caroline committed, but she, all her cohorts and habitues of the hill were finally vanquished. The companies, when lethargic and in need of practice, took a turn at Vinegar Hill.

Kerosene lamps were used for lighting the shacks, and one of the methods of the firemen for obtaining much-needed practice was to station an engine in a nearby secluded spot in readiness for action. Half a dozen of the boys would saunter toward the Hill and become engaged in a prearranged brawl to attract the inhabitants out of the shacks, another would cautiously enter a convenient house, fasten a long string to the lamp, thrust the end of the string through one of the numerous cracks in the siding, and make hasty exit. Pulling the string to a hiding place, he would overturn the lamp and fire would soon result to provide the contemplated amusement for the firemen, and at the same time rid the Hill of one more shack. Pulling on the string generally broke it near the object to which it was tied, and it would be gathered in to prevent detection.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mechanic 6's station was but a short distance west of Vinegar Hill, and the boys never allowed more than two weeks to pass without a wash-day at Caroline Riley's; sometimes three or four of the huts would receive a "cleansing" at one time.

On one occasion of Six's visit an unusual number of negro men were on the Hill, and some of them became ugly and offered resistance to the firemen, who resolved to make of the settlement a thing of the past. That night four of the huts on the brow of the hill overlooking the bayou were dumped into the murky stream twenty feet below.

Brooks 5 of the Fifth Ward had lain dormant for quite a while, and rust had begun to gather on the tires of the engine wheels. Its boys decided to make a run on



**CHIEF FRED C. SEIBERT**  
Houston Fire Department

Vinegar Hill, and by strange coincidence the Mechanics met them on the same mission—of washing the premises. Practically every shack was made unfit for further habitation by the strong water pressure, and the negroes scattered in every direction, never to return. The saloon on the west side of the Hill still remained, and a week or so later, headed by a delegation of old citizens, Mechanic 6 razed it to the ground with water and hooks.

\* \* \* \* \*

Patsy Bennett, a member of Caroline Riley's Vinegar Hill family, took up her abode in close proximity to the engine house of Stonewall No. 3, when that company had a hose reel on Smith street just off Preston. Patsy always used the loud pedal when playing "nigger ragtime" on her "pianny," and Patsy's piano was always going, much to the chagrin and displeasure of the firemen. They finally decided upon a plan of action.

"Don't answer the alarm at 10:05 o'clock tonight," was the message sent to other fire stations by the boys of No. 3.

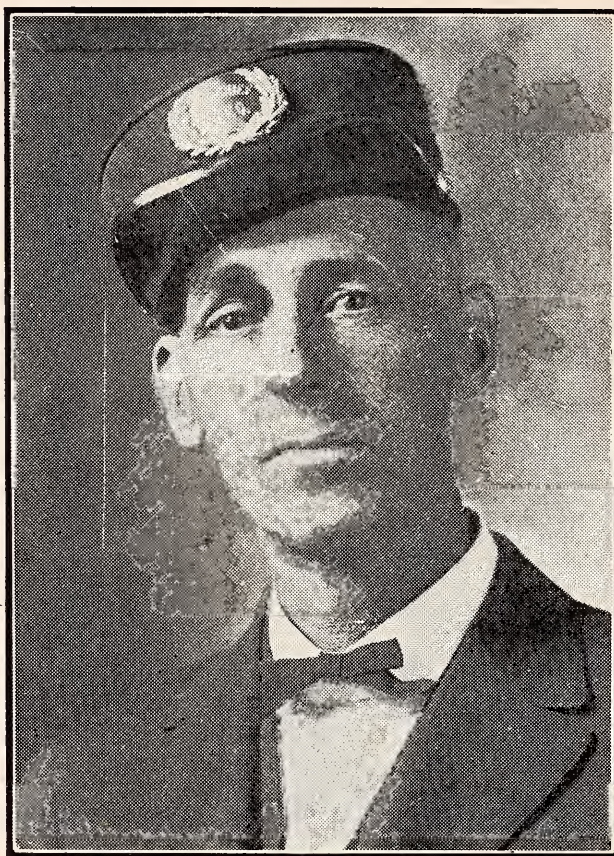
By 10 o'clock a bale of hay had been saturated with five gallons of the lowest fire-test oil that could be had. It may have been kerosene, but it burned like gasoline. Four willing hands quickly but gently placed the bale in a back room at Patsy's house—a match—a flame—a fire. The big bell in the market tower never sounded a more dreadful alarm than the one rung at 10:05 that night.

The Stonewall boys were promptly on the scene. Their stream first found Patsy's piano; then the mattresses were soaked, and the flames extinguished lastly.

Patsy sent the Stonewall boys her thanks for their promptness, and a wagon moved her cook stove and a few chairs out of the city limits next day.

### NEGROES WANTED AN ENGINE.

Not long after the Civil War, when the colored race began to wake to a realization that they had been freed from slavery by edict of President Lincoln, every 19th of June, as now, was celebrated in the best possible manner, by parade, barbecue, picnic and handshaking. The event each



FIRST ASSISTANT CHIEF J. A. BOYD  
Houston Fire Department

year was handled by a different committee, and each tried to outdo the other as the years went by. It was during Billy Baker's administration that they conceived the idea of parading with one of the Department steamers. A delegation waited upon the Mayor, secured the permit, and an order was issued to have the steamer, spic and span, ready for the morning of the 19th, and placed in Butt's stable, corner Milam street and Preston avenue, the evening before.

All this was accordingly done, and on the morning of the parade twenty young negroes, uniformed in red flannel shirts and black pants, presented themselves at the stable for the engine.

Bill Williams was chief of the Department, and Ben Riesner was assistant. They were the only ones seen to enter the stable during the night previous.

The steamer failed to show up in parade, and in the newspaper the following day appeared a notice of reward, signed by W. W. Williams, Chief, offering \$1000 for the apprehension of the party guilty of removing the dome, axle nuts and center pole of the steamer at Butt's stable.

#### FOUND STORE IN CISTERN.

During a Main street fire, back in the '80s, it was found that the fire cisterns were practically empty and the firemen were forced to resort to a private cistern in the back yard of one of the merchants near the scene of the conflagration. They were surprised to find the private cistern filled with "dry goods, notions, boots, shoes, etc.," all stored away in neat order. The boys said they thwarted at least a bankruptcy case even if they did not get water.

#### "DAT VAS ONE GOOT FIRE."

The place had been completely gutted and about the time the firemen were quitting, the owner showed up in apparently a much excited condition. He rushed into the charred and smoked debris. Soon he emerged and said: "Poys, dat vas a goot fire; it burnt up all the pooks efen, und I haf noddings to prove my loss but my svorn vordt."



SECOND ASSISTANT CHIEF W. E. FRANKS  
Houston Fire Department

## HOW THE OLD BARTON HOME BURNED.

Furnishing amusement for firemanic visitors on celebration days devolved upon any of the boys of the local Department who could provide something novel. One stunt always executed was to have a fire.

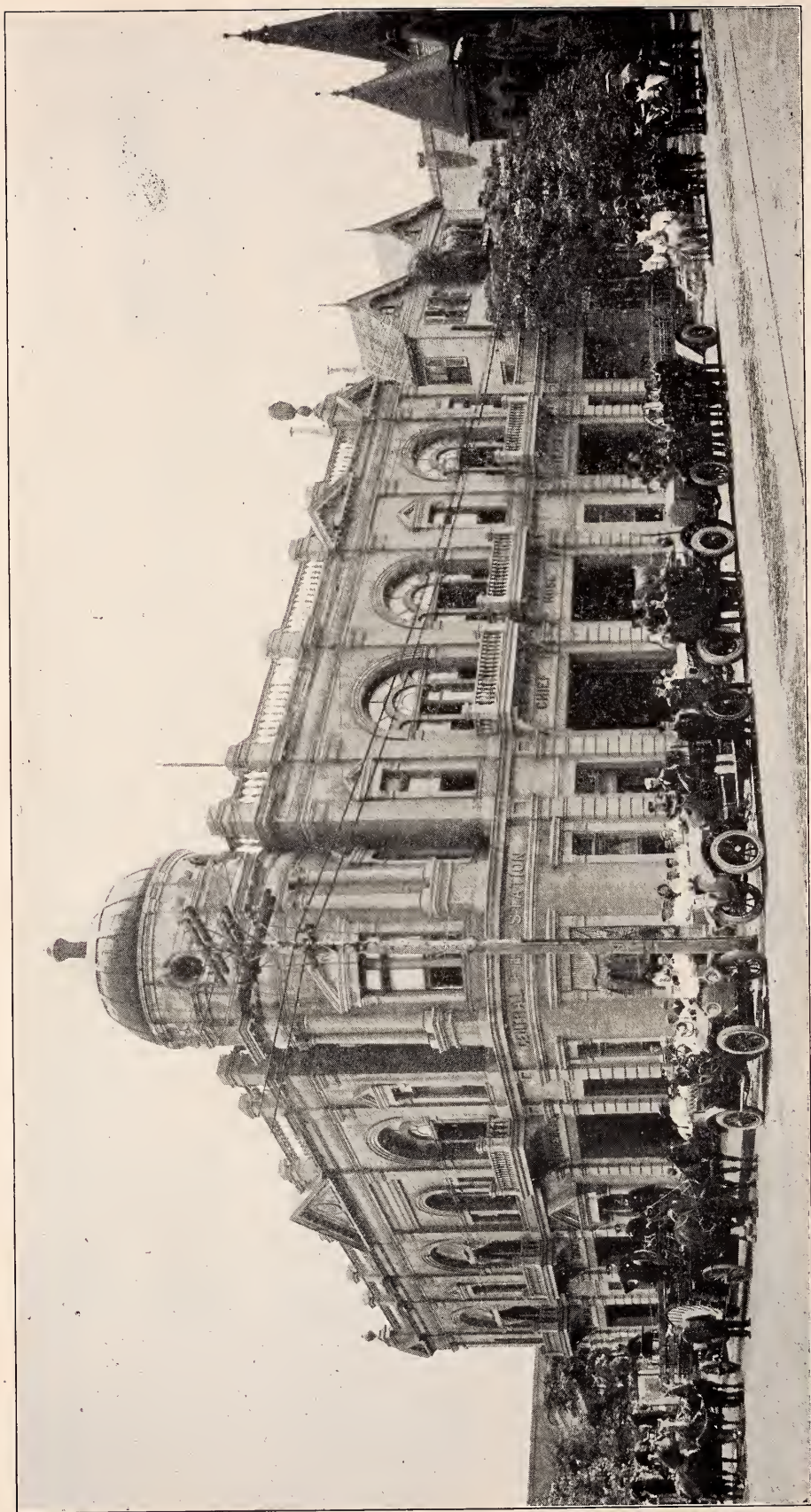
A story is told by Henry Donnelly and Bob Boyd of an escapade that nearly cost one or more lives at a time when the State Firemen's Convention was being held in Houston. The visitors had been in town two days and in that time had been given no chance to see the Bayou City aggregation in action. An antique wreck of a house known as the Barton homestead, standing on the site of the Katy depot, was singled out for sacrifice by Donnelly and Boyd.

The house had long been abandoned as a place of residence, and the roof and most of the upper story had caved in. The pair crawled through the weeds that surrounded the place and made an entrance through a broken window. They collected all the rubbish in the place in one corner and set fire to it. Then they tried to make an escape.

The dilapidated condition of the old house was against them, for just as Donnelly was crawling through the window his foot hit the wall and a ton or two of plaster fell.

The falling debris onto the floor of the old shell caused tremendous noise, and the "committee of two" decided to place as much space between themselves and the house as possible. They made a dash through the weeds and ran into the outstretched arms of Dan Scanlan, the policeman on that beat. The policeman was excited. It was dark and he could not recognize his prisoners. He could see the flames, which were beginning to shoot skyward through the top of the old building, and he could not fathom why anyone should take the trouble to set the place afire. Before he had a chance to figure it out, the two amateur firemen turned on him and bowled him over.

He jumped to his feet and began to empty his six-shooter. Both Boyd and Donnelly agree that Scanlan came perilously close to being a good shot. The bullets whistled as they passed the fugitive. Finally, however, the police-



CENTRAL FIRE STATION, Corner Texas Ave. and San Jacinto St.

man's ammunition gave out, and the pair were able to breathe again.

By this time the blaze had made a great headway, and from the other side of the bayou it looked as if the whole Fifth Ward was afire. The shots roused everybody who happened to be in the vicinity. When the incendiaries crept up to where they could get a view of the Milam street bridge they saw a shadowy group at one end of it, and they did not need to be told that the police were waiting for someone to come across that way.

But the mystery attached to the affair gave them a chance to escape. The alarm had been turned in shortly after the policeman had begun to shoot at them. As they huddled in the shadows, wondering how they were to get out of their predicament, they heard the clanging of a bell and the Protection reel came lumbering across the bridge. Just as it passed them they dived for it, made a successful catch and were pulled aboard.

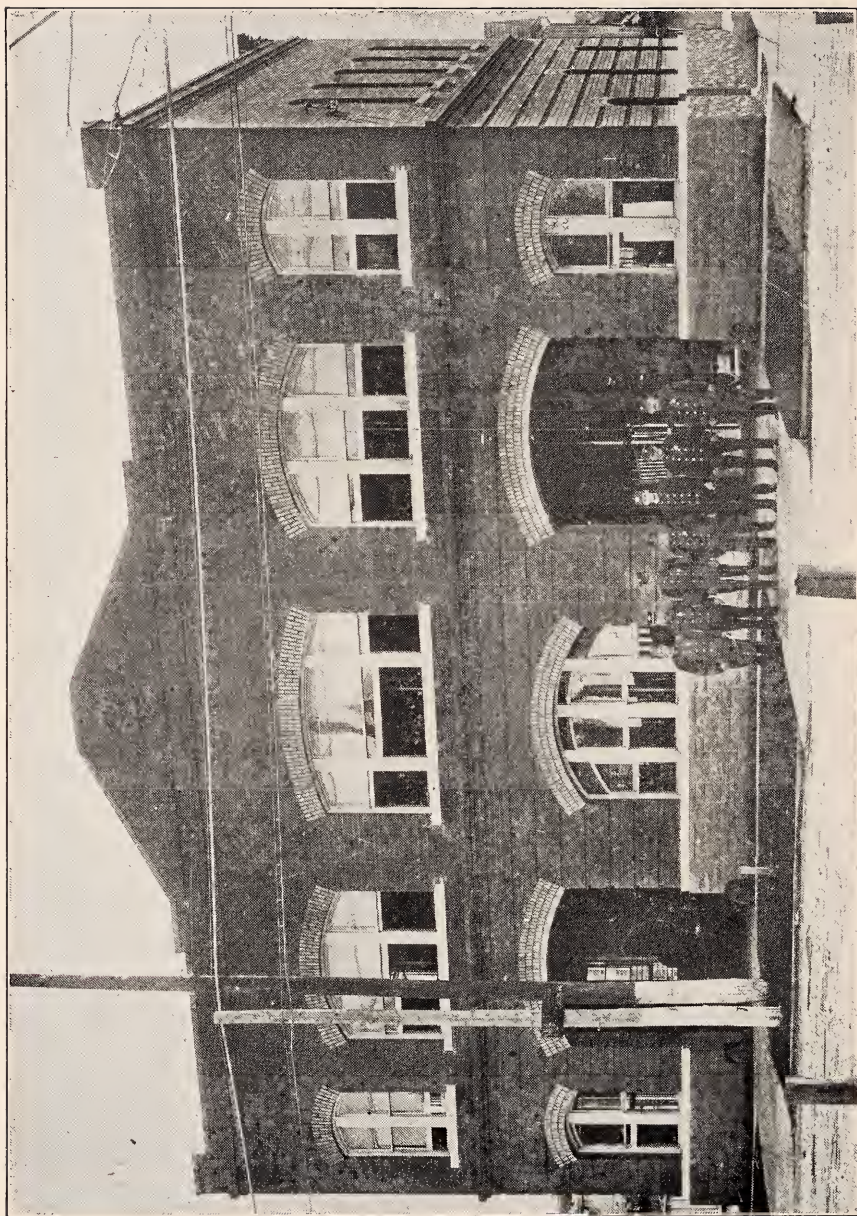
### THE GAME FAILED TO WORK.

When Frank McGowen was assistant chief, in 1890, there was a questionable resort called the Union House, near Alex McGowen's foundry. It faced the railroad and abutted property now occupied by the Magnolia Brewery, and was a little out of the way for ordinary traffic, but just the place for its purposes of carousal, drink and debauchery. The fire boys decided to "wash it out" one night, and arrangements were perfected for the companies to happen on the scene simultaneously and begin operations. The only way to get to it was on the front or north side. As the assistant chief and his men rushed upon the place they were met by a dozen or so men and women with Winchester rifles and six-shooters.

"Where's the fire?" shouted McGowen.

"Right here!" answered a voice from the house.

There was no smoke or other indication of fire, and the game was called off. Some one had put the Union people next, and possibly a bloody combat was averted.



No. 2 ENGINE HOUSE - W. E. Heath, Captain

## HORSE SENSE IN THE DEPARTMENT.

The companies in the volunteer service have had a number of horses with a degree of understanding beyond the mere conception of human intelligence. Thorough training, kindly treatment and gentle handling brought into full development the "horse sense" that was in them. Interesting stories are told of some of them that make our admiration of the horse grow stronger and are convincing proof of superior sense possessed by the horse over the domestic animal family.

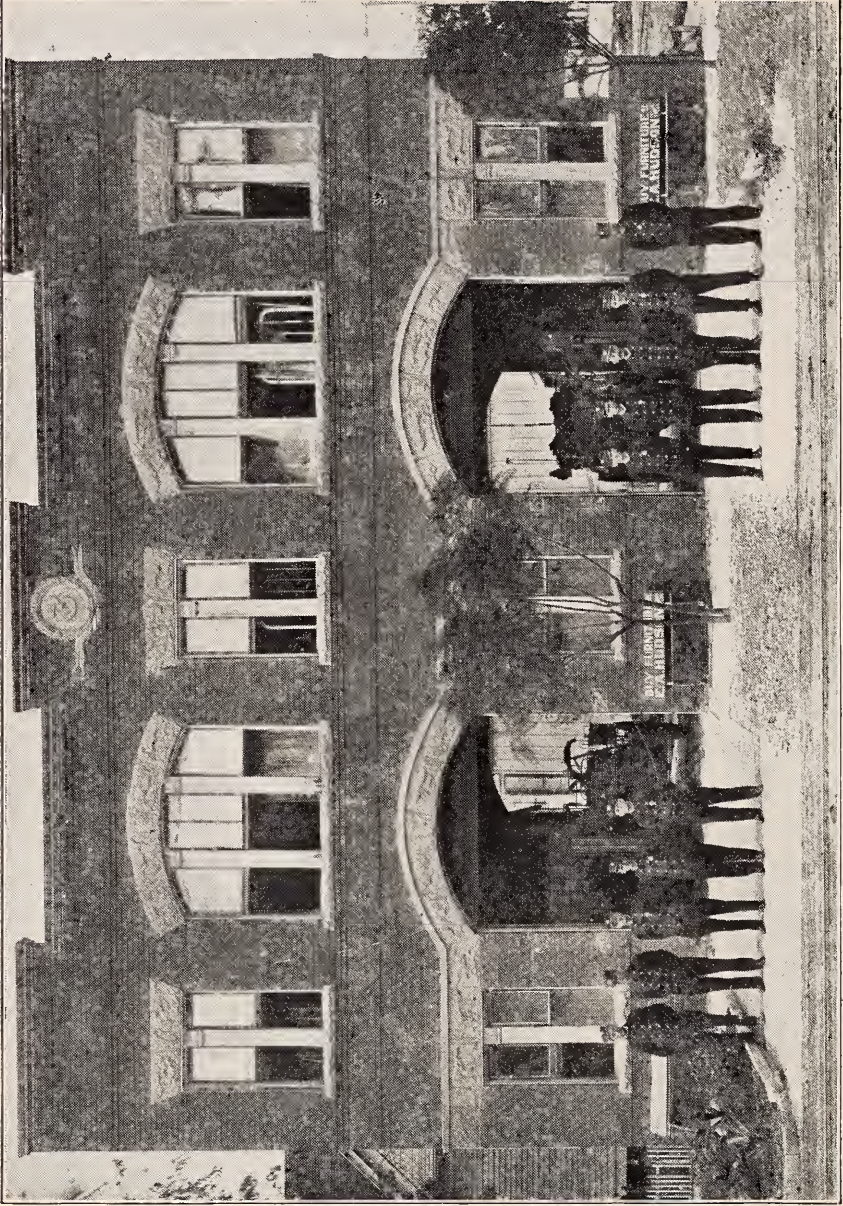
"King," a favorite in Protection No. 1, while going to a fire on San Felipe street, broke a leg and continued for several blocks on three legs to the scene of the blaze.

"Matt," for many years in the service of Stonewall No. 3, and one of the pets of the Department, almost learned to talk. Old age mustered him out of service, and he was sold to a tinner to pull his repair wagon. He did not want to leave his station, and by his every action implored the boys to retain him. Old Matt was ill at ease, and finally dropped dead the first time he was hitched to the tinner's wagon. "Died of a broken heart" is the epitaph to his memory.

When Liberty No. 2 was stationed on Franklin street, old man Barker dozed in his chair on duty one night and did not respond to an alarm as quickly as "Blacky" thought necessary, and while the big bell in the market tower still rang out upon the night air, this faithful animal with his nose turned over the chair in which Barker was sitting and awoke him.

"Brownie" of Mechanic 6 never waited for his chain to be dropped to release him from his stall. When the snaffle fastening was used, he tugged at it with his teeth. Finally the chain was fastened with a peg of wood and Brownie released himself.

"Gray Dick," the smart horse belonging to Stonewall, was a beautiful specimen of the equine family and was possessed of almost human intelligence. "Dick" had many admirers among the women of "Happy Hollow," and as No.



No. 3 ENGINE HOUSE—Pat Daly, Captain

3's station was located near that resort they frequently strolled to the engine house to see their pet. Alarms were infrequent, and sometimes for weeks the Department horses were inactive save for an occasional "airing" given them during the afternoons. Two of the women most deeply infatuated with "Dick" sought to take a buggy ride with "Dick" as the motive power. Remonstrance of the firemen at the risky and unwise proposition had no effect upon the fair ones. "He is so cute and gentle and innocent-looking and harmless that we know we can drive him," was the persuasive statement they made to the foreman, and he finally gave them an order for the horse for a certain afternoon. They rented a magnificent set of silver-mounted harness from old man Tips and secured an elegant single buggy from Joe Baldwin's stables and, dressed in their finest, cut quite a swath on the streets before going out to the Fair Grounds for a spin around the race track. All went lovely until they emerged through the big gate city-bound, when "Dick's" ears caught the sound of the fire bell. It took "Dick" just three minutes to reach his station, a distance of two miles. Ruffles, ribbons and lingerie were left along the trail to mark the joy ride the women could not be dissuaded from. When they regained speech they could not find words to adequately say what they thought of that "horrid horse."

"Dick" grew old in the service and finally was sold to a transfer company. He never failed to respond to an alarm, and in so doing did so much damage to trunks, parcels, etc., he was always tied hard and fast to some immovable object, provided his driver heard the alarm first.

"Dick" was killed accidentally by a Southern Pacific locomotive afterward.

When the big market was destroyed in 1876, Tom De Young rode Mechanics' horse, bareback and without bridle, to the scene in four minutes.

While lounging around No. 6's engine house, after supper one evening, when a fire broke out in Mrs. Gallagher's boarding house near by, the boys did not take time to hitch up "Brown" and "House," but pulled the pumper out by hand.



No. 4 ENGINE HOUSE—C. P. Brown, Captain

The animals became crazed with apparent jealousy, and when released rushed on behind the engine.

In 1874, when Henry Credo, driving Stonewall 3, struck a lamp pole at Preston avenue and Main street, the impact broke the harness and the horses went a block—to Congress avenue—before they could stop, when, of their own accord, they returned to their engine. Credo was found on the awning of Fox's bank in an unconscious condition.

### GAVE UP IN DISGUST.

After the steam engines had been taken away from the city, a fire broke out on the corner of Brazos and Capitol in the old Lottman homestead, a two-story frame building. Practically all the old hose in the Department had been worn out, cast aside in one pile in the north tower of the market house, and then resurrected for further use when the city had failed to buy a new lot, again cast aside and again patched up and brought into use. On the occasion of the Lottman fire the water works had been in action a year or so, and when the pumps were put on the real trouble began, for length after length of the old cotton hose burst so fast the volunteers could not get a stream at the nozzles. Still they coupled in and threw aside the bursted hose. Then gey-sers would spurt up at some unlooked-for place.

Finally the water pipe burst beyond all hope of immediate repair and the Department gave up in disgust, blaming the city administration for non-supply of hose more than for anything else. They stood around and sat about to watch the building go up in smoke. The mayor of the city happened to be a spectator at the fire and, seeing the awful condition in which things had gotten, suggested the formation of a bucket brigade. Where were the buckets! Another idea seized the mayor and he ordered a truck posthaste to a hardware store for buckets. Worn out with fighting water, the fire boys rallied to bucket service and soon had the fire out. An order for a new supply of hose went forth the following day, and never since have the firemen had to beg for tools and equipment with which to work.

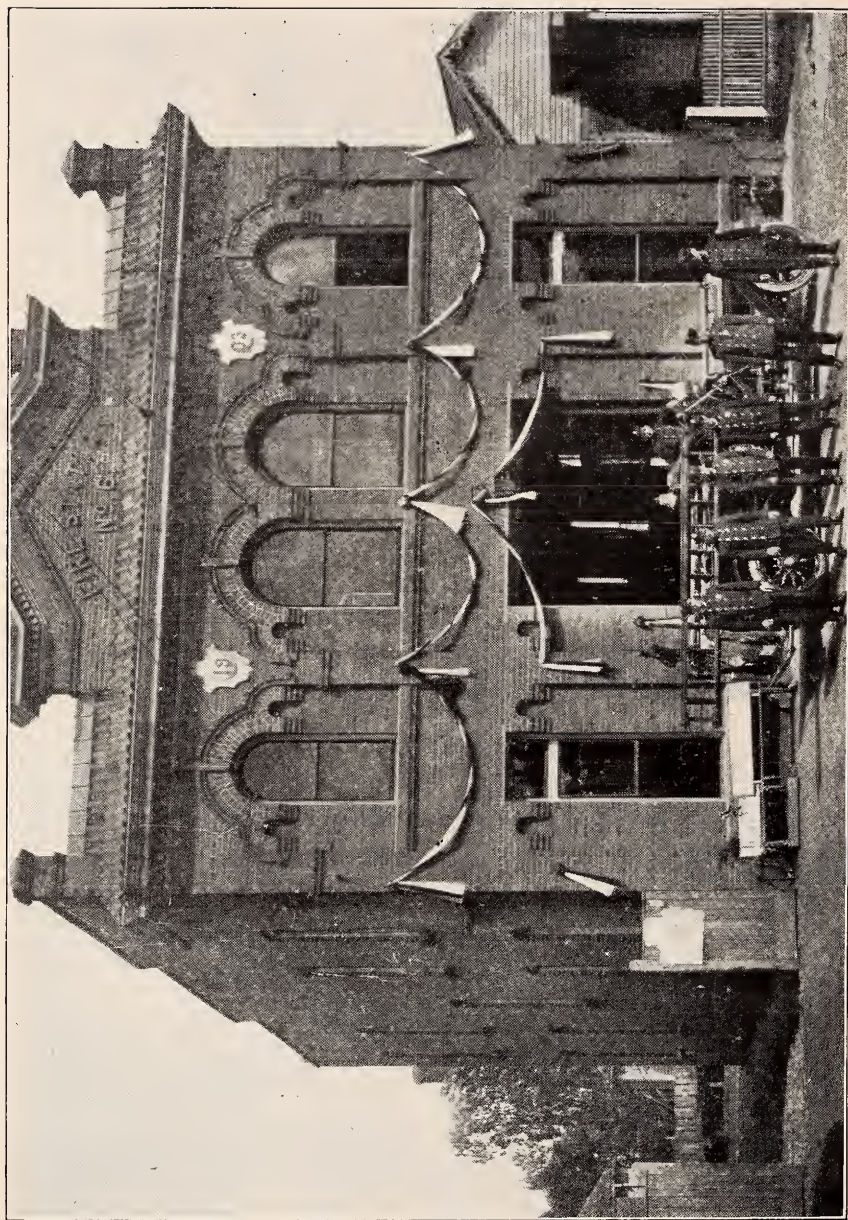


No. 5 ENGINE HOUSE—R. T. Smith, Captain

## TRAPPED THE DEPARTMENT.

It was in 1874 that the Houston City Street Railway Company was incorporated. Small currency was very scarce, and the company conceived the idea of printing a hundred thousand or so tickets for street car passage on the few short lines then in existence. Soon these tickets became current in the business affairs of the city as small change, as the railway company was amply able to redeem in money all their paper presented for payment at the offices, where Abbott Cockrell's drug store is now located—in fact, that was the street railway mart, where crews changed and all business was transacted that pertained to the company. Soon the merchants realized that too much of the street car paper was getting into circulation, as new tickets were constantly appearing. Investigation developed that a party of counterfeiters had established headquarters near old Longcope Square, in the Second ward, and was turning out street car tickets as fast as a job press could do the work. The police bagged the gang, but were unable to secure the dies, plates or material, as the building in which they operated was set on fire when they saw their game was up. This was one occasion when the entire Fire Department was trapped. As usual, all companies turned out to answer the alarm and considering all drawbacks made a fair run until they struck the flats. Then one by one the trucks got stuck in the gullies, where they were forced to camp all night. In the meantime the counterfeiting plant burned to the ground. The street railway company redeemed all the outstanding tickets, but it was never made public what the amount was in dollars and cents.

In 1889 the Bayou City Street Railway Company came into existence in Houston. After a few years both companies were made one, but no effort has ever been made to reissue street car tickets.



No. 6 ENGINE HOUSE—Chas. Fischer and C. A. Dortic, Captains

## BILL PERRY ON HIS MUSCLE.

When Bill Perry built his pretty home on Fannin street, between Texas and Capitol avenues, he had just right to be proud of it. But there were two old and unsightly shacks near his premises which he was not proud of, and which finally led to serious trouble. Bill endeavored to purchase the old buildings, but a sale could not be effected. Then he became a disagreeable neighbor, to no avail. One night at 11 o'clock both shacks became ablaze about the same time and the occupants were forced to make a quick get-away. The alarm was sounded and Stonewall No. 3 was the first hose company to arrive at the scene.

Bill Perry was there also. Those acquainted with Bill know too well that he was never at a loss for words—any kind of words expressive of his thoughts when in bad mood. Bill was mad, first, at the fellow who rang the alarm; and, second, at “any old fool company that would try to save worthless trash,” as he expressed it.

Joe Lee was the nozzleman nearest to Bill when the latter demanded to know—

“What the — are you doing here?”

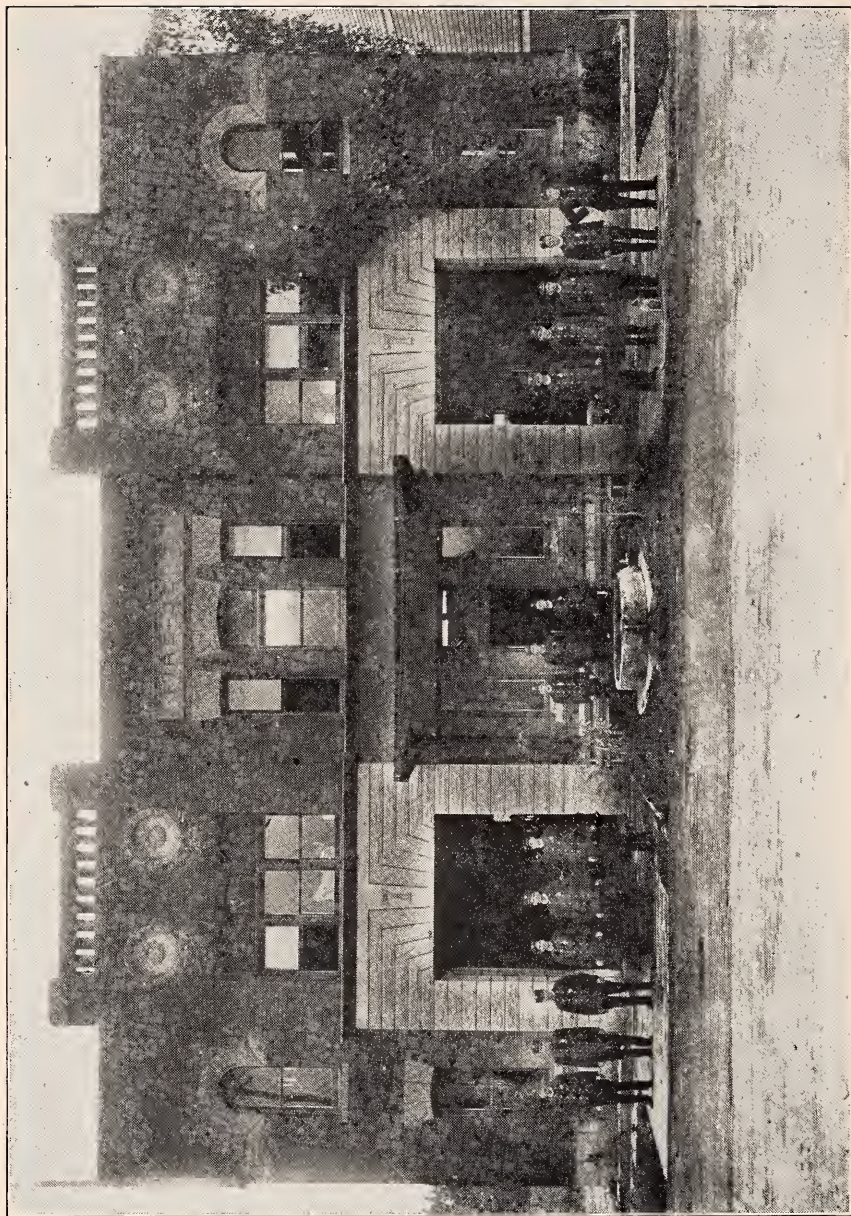
“Doing our duty,” replied Joe.

“To — with you,” said Perry, at the same time landing a blow above Lee’s right eye that knocked him down.

By this time the pressure was on the water mains and as water was turned on it jerked the nozzle out of the hands of the other nozzleman and, striking Perry, knocked him down.

Lee gained his feet and, securing hold of the cavorting nozzle, washed Mr. Perry into his home through a window of the basement.

The shacks went up in smoke, Perry gained his point, and Lee today wears a knot over the eye for “doing his duty.”



No. 7 ENGINE HOUSE - D. C. King, Captain

### "A DISGRACE TO YOUR SEX."

Everybody knew good-natured and jolly George P. Brown of Mechanic 6. In his younger days George was a robust, round-faced fellow, with a profusion of red blood that made him a picture of health. On one occasion he failed to turn out with his company on parade in celebration of Firemen's Day. Considerable anxiety was manifested for the jester of No. 6 and the foreman ordered his search and round-up just before the time for the engine to leave its house. They inquired at George's home, but nothing could be seen of him. He, however, followed the searchers to the engine station, keeping just a few paces behind them. He heard them report that he could not be found, and the foreman ordered the men to the ropes for the march to the assembling point in the city. George, dressed as an Irish biddy, was in the line. The foreman appreciated the temporary presence of a woman in the ranks, but informed her she would have to leave the ropes before the parade started. Arriving on Main street the disguised George in woman's apparel, still unknown to his fellows, mixed with the spectators, danced, exhibited his cotton stockings to the knees and in other ways made himself attractive to the men folk and distractive to the ladies. Finally two elderly matrons, constituting themselves a committee from their sex, attempted to subdue the jolly one by expostulating with him.

"You are no lady," said one.

George shook his head.

"Madam, you are a disgrace to your sex," said the other. "Come to my house and I will entertain you for the day—come, get off the streets."

George nodded assent, and in triumph the trio marched from the crowd that had gathered—a thorn between two roses. They had proceeded but a block when George, in stentorian voice, inquired: "Where do you live?" A parting of the ways then followed, and Biddy Brown was made room for on the decorated engine for the parade. It was a feature, too, and Mechanic won the prize.



No. 8 ENGINE HOUSE—C. J. Ollre, Captain

### FILED OFF THE THREADS.

"Tricks of the trade" were unknown to the volunteer firemen, yet some of them wouldn't hesitate to act upon a suggestion to gain a point. A trick was played upon Curtin 9 in 1884 that smacked of downright meanness and rascality and cost the city something for repairs. It was customary to exercise the companies once in a while by stationing each six blocks from Market Square, and at a given signal they would make the best time possible and procure water from a certain hydrant. The company putting first water over the south tower would be the champion. Curtin 9 had fast encroached upon the laurels of Stonewall 3 and Mechanic 6 for quick and efficient work, and some ill feeling had sprung up between them. On one of these test occasions the Curtin boys got first water, but when pressure was put on the hose popped off the hydrant connection and they were vanquished. Some one had filed off the threads of the spout on the hydrant and the connection failed to hold.

### VANQUISHED THE LIGHT GUARD.

Houston's crack military company, the Light Guard, was generous in the acceptance of invitations to assist in parades and other public functions in olden days. The company included in its membership the finest and most cultured young men in the city, who were so thoroughly drilled and versed in the arms manual that they won the highest honors and swept the United States of all first prizes offered during a period of several years. No parade of any character was complete without the Light Guard, and no part of any parade filled the spectators with greater enthusiasm than did this splendid body of militiamen as they marched in line with steady step and soldierly bearing. The Light Guard was the pride of the city, and its services were appreciated by the firemen in parade, but those manly fellows in handsome gray uniforms received too much attention from the ladies at one Firemen's Day celebration at the old Fair Grounds and aroused a jealousy among the firemen that came near ending in a riot. As evening approached rain



No. 9 ENGINE HOUSE—Otto Kersten, Captain

began falling and everybody sought shelter, all the young people taking refuge in the pavilion where the dancing program was to fill part of the evening festivities. As the enchanting strains of waltz music floated through the hall couples entered the maze by twos, fours and dozens, and it was soon noted that the fire boys on the waiting list were becoming impatient at what they considered a usurpation of authority by their military guests. Like a host of savages, and without warning, the firemen flooded the hall in numbers, rushed the soldier boys into the rain outside, and took possession. The stacked arms had previously been confiscated to prevent retaliation, but the Guard never again were guests of the firemen.

### RIVAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS.

Getting first water at any fire was the ambition of every company in Houston. It was a sort of an unwritten law that the company getting to the fire first had a sort of right to dictate the methods which should be used in fighting it, and though the jealousy between the various organizations was always at the boiling point, they all did their work according to the rules.

Sometimes, however, there were two plugs in the vicinity of the fire and two companies might claim the right of priority. Then would come a water fight and the fire would be allowed to go its way until the rivals settled their differences.

In 1889, or thereabouts, a car of cotton caught fire on a siding near the Southern Pacific shops. The Southern Pacific boys hauled out their apparatus and began to fight it. They found difficulty in making headway with only one main and turned in an alarm for the city department. Curtin 9 was the first on the scene, and through right of being regular firemen, undertook to tell the shopmen what ought to be done. The shop crew were on top of the car when the command came, and not understanding the agreement whereby No. 9 had authority to direct the campaign, answered by turning the hose on them.

The city organization retaliated in kind and for five min-



No. 10 ENGINE HOUSE—Ed Smith, Captain

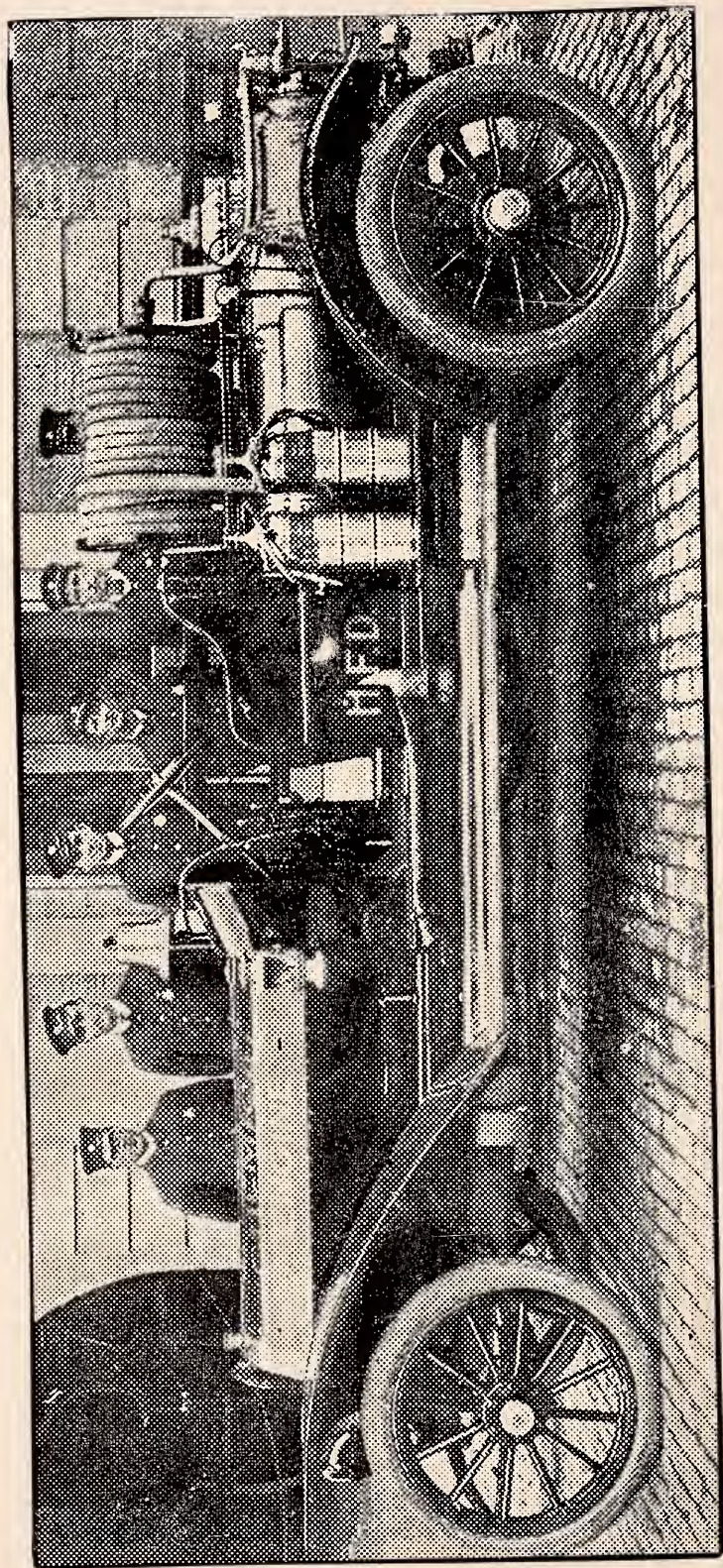
utes the battle raged. The Southern Pacific men from their vantage point on top of the car seemed to have things their own way, though the Curtins tried to throw water from every conceivable angle.

Then, just as the city company seemed on the verge of defeat, two more companies hove into sight and anchored to nearby plugs. They understood the situation at once and aided in driving the shopmen from the car. When the railroaders had been subdued the rule was explained to them and both crews declared a truce and put out the fire.

### DARE-DEVIL DRIVERS.

Billy Evans was a dare-devil driver of Stonewall 3. Al Bilby made a reputation as a reckless goer, and Charles Richart ("Buffalo") rode on the winds for Mechanic 6. Buffalo's trouble was in locating the corners at top speed, and Bilby just didn't care which side of his engine was on the ground, just so it was moving. All three of these fearless drivers had charmed lives.

When Three's engine house was on Travis near Texas avenue, Billy Evans was the driver, and lost no time by the shortest possible route in getting to a fire. One night an alarm sounded just about the time Billy was getting in his bunk, and without shoes or hat he dashed out onto Texas avenue, headed for Main street. At that time the electric light poles were in the center of the street intersections. They were fair-sized poles, and how Evans failed to see the one at Prairie is a matter of conjecture. When he did see it he tried to drive on both sides. The pole of the truck hit the obstruction squarely and threw the driver about fifteen feet in the direction of what is now Sweeney's jewelry store. In the meantime the truck of the hook and ladder company had left the truck house at San Jacinto and Prairie and reached the corner of Main almost at the time that Evans hit. There was no time to stop and the driver was put to the choice of taking his chance of running over Evans or risking his crew by hitting the wreckage of the Stonewall truck. Jim Lilly, the tillerman, decided the question in a flash by jamming over the tiller. The heavy truck



The first piece of motor fire apparatus built in Houston from an old six-cylinder automobile at a total cost of about \$1800. It is first-class in every detail, was constructed in the machine shop at Central Fire Station under the superintendency of Chief Fred Seibert, and will be stationed at Brunner. Those who made it, from left to right—Dave Fisher, A. T. Zueck, O. L. Henning, Albert Roper, Bert Cecil, W. E. Hunt, auto mechanic. Mr. Roper is master mechanic at Central Fire Station. It took two months to build this car.

went up over the curb, missed Evans' head by almost a foot and tore down an awning post. Without waiting to see what had happened, and still dragging bits of the shattered awning behind them the hook and ladder company went on to the fire. Evans was picked up unconscious and carried to the hospital, where the doctors said he might not live through the night. He upset all calculations, however, by appearing at the engine house the next day somewhat battered, but in good spirits.

"Buffalo" generally reined up with other companies at every fire if the distance was not too great. If the distance was great "Buffalo" tried to be first on the scene, regardless of intervening conditions. He came near killing himself and his son, however, by not reducing speed at Macatee's corner on Washington street, when his engine turned over and seriously injured both. Mr. Richart enjoys talking about the old volunteer days and says he always understood No. 6's motto to be "Get There," and he got.

The boys tell one on Charlie, however, that shows his speed. An alarm came in from the Fifth ward one night after an exercise drive and before the horses were unhitched. Alone he raced for the scene, a grocery and beer saloon, arriving on the ground ahead of the other companies. Leaping from his engine, he made straight for the big ice box, from which he saved a half-filled keg of beer. Putting the keg on his engine he hurriedly drove around the block and secreted it beneath a foot bridge for future use. He then returned to the fire as if just first arriving. After the blaze was extinguished he took the Sixes around for a treat, but alas! some one had confiscated his salvage. The Curtins always maintained that they knew nothing of what became of the beer.

### "DAD" LEVY'S HONOR.

Albert Levy was one of the mainstays of the Volunteer Department and never failed to attend a convention of the State Association. It was in Waco in 1877 that "Dad" declared himself and stripped for single-handed action against a bunch of Galveston firemen who had imbibed beyond the safety limit and declared they could clean up the



**CLIFF PROCTOR BROWN.**

Captain C. P. Brown of Station No. 4, Houston Fire Department, was born in Hannibal, Mo., February 5, 1873, and came to Texas when 6 years of age. Entered the Department January 4, 1899, stationed at No. 10's house; was then transferred to No. 5; after a time he went back to No. 10; for awhile he was lieutenant at No. 1 when it was located on Fannin Street; then did service with No. 8, and afterward was on Central Station wagon. Captain Brown was given charge of No. 4 station on February 1, 1913, and not only has a splendid crew of men, but good and tidy station keepers.



**N. BOUDREAUX.**

One of the competent units of Chief Seibert's department and Captain Brown's company is N. Boudreaux. Has resided in Houston fifteen years and been with the Fire Department seven years. His experience as a locomotive fireman and engineer, coupled with an understanding of practical matters, make of him one of the best steamer engineers in the present service and one of the staunch and efficient crew at No. 4 station.

whole Houston delegation in a free-for-all battle with bare fists. The remark was directed at "Dad" Levy, and as he was the only Houstonian present, some of them bantered him for a fight. "Dad" knew the odds against him were too great and he refused to accept their proposition. Then they started to take off his coat to "put him in better shape," as they declared. While tugging to remove the coat "Dad" moved nearer a brick wall, and about the time he got in "front face" position the coat came off. Levy, with back to the wall, knocked those eight Galveston firemen down as fast as they came to him, and in their besotted shape kept coming, and coming. Black eyes and skinned faces were ornaments carried by the bunch when policemen stopped the melee. "Dad" Levy was nearly exhausted, but had wind enough to say: "I'm little, but cover lots of ground." Levy was stockily built, about five feet tall, weighed close to 200 pounds, bow-legged and hard to upset.

### THOUGHT THE TOWN WAS BURNING.

When Eugene Parker was chief of the Department he received orders from the city council to tear down and destroy an old building on Bremond Square (now Jesse Jones' lumber yard), which had become a nuisance and an eyesore. The building had been used as drilling quarters by the Houston Light Guard. The chief decided the best way to destroy it was by fire, and summoning Stonewall No. 3 to his aid to prevent other damage, the torch was applied one quiet afternoon. Without restriction the flames soared skyward and the dense smoke palled the southern section of the city, occasioning some excitement among those who knew not of its origin. When the fire was at its best some boys set fire to an old frame market on the corner of Main and Leeland, and two fires were raging at the same time. Great excitement prevailed among the South Enders over a report that an effort was being made to burn the town. People began hurrying about in frantic endeavor to save their belongings, wagons were hurriedly pressed into service to remove household goods and general consternation prevailed. It was several hours before true facts were learned



CHAS. D. GREEN

Author "Fire Fighters of Houston, 1838-1915"

Member Mechanic No. 6

and quiet had again been restored. Bremond Square was used as a show ground for circuses for years after being cleared of its only obstruction.

### THE WORLD'S RECORD.

The statement has never been contested that Mechanic No. 6 of Houston earned the world's record when 21 men made a whirlwind drive with a 3000-pound Bolton hand engine, connected two lengths of hose and forced water through the nozzle in the remarkable time of 46 seconds; distance 250 yards. This record was made twice, at Waco in 1877 and at Houston in 1878. Foreman Alex Martin of the company had keen foresight and was quick to accept and at least try out any reasonable suggestion to facilitate the conditions prescribed by the rules, and at the same time not violate them. He selected the swiftest men in his company, designated two to mount the engine in transit, connect the hose and suction and prime the pumps; these were Tom DeYoung and Fred Cushman. The leads were Dick Jones and Walter Goggan; the wheelmen were George Underwood and Ed Allen. At a given signal certain of the runners relinquished the ropes, caught the side bars of the machine as it passed and assisted in stopping it at the desired place. Then with three strokes—as you would count one, two, three—water gushed from the nozzle.

This remarkable race took place 37 years ago. Some of the runners are long since deceased, while a few still remain to pleasantly recite the occurrences of old volunteer days. The prize contestants embraced Alex Martin, foreman; Fred Lugenbuhl, Theo. Pereira, George Underwood, Fred Cushman, Tom J. DeYoung, James Lattimer, Chas. D. Green, Frank Bedford, Emil Rasch, Ed Shea, F. C. Fourmy, Fred Fenwick, Henry Maura, John Brown, Walter Goggan, Dick Jones, Ed Allen, John Walker, John Anderson and Lee Lamphear.



CLARENCE R. GEORGE  
City Electrician

## Houston's Fire Alarm System.

Installation of the fire alarm system in Houston was completed during the term of Chief Tom Ravell. G. L. Vaughan was the first superintendent of the system. Alderman B. A. Riesner always wanted an efficient fire-fighting system—not only machines and men, but the most improved alarm, and his efforts in the city council brought forth the present Gamewell fire alarm so cleverly eulogized by Clarence R. George, city electrician, for many years.

“A complete and dependable fire alarm system is to any municipality an invaluable adjunct to its fire fighting equipment,” says Mr. George. “It makes no difference how much money is spent on fire fighting apparatus, in securing the services of expert firemen or in the thousand and one other details that go to make up a modern fire department—if there exists a delay in transmitting an alarm, it means so much more fire loss and additional property damage.

“Taking it all in all, the best equipment a municipality can secure in its fire alarm system is in the end the cheapest. This important branch of the fire service at all times has to be maintained at the top notch of efficiency by trained workers, in order that it shall always be ready to properly perform its functions in all kinds of weather and under extreme conditions. With so much of the system constantly exposed to the elements, all the working parts require to be carefully adjusted in order to meet any and all requirements made on it. Any failure on the part of any portion of the fire alarm mechanism to properly respond, or any inaccuracy that might result, would give the Fire Department a wrong location, thereby greatly adding to the fire loss.”

Experience and practice of recent years have plainly shown the desirability of having alarms turned in from fire alarm boxes, rather than by the frequent use of the telephone, as is not only prevalent in Houston, but in many other cities in the West and South. Frequently in sending in an alarm over the telephone, a person will naturally be excited and quite often give the wrong location. Sometimes

a little time is lost in making the proper connection, or the line may be in bad working order, thus causing a delay. Experience has shown that it is the first few minutes of a fire that counts the most, and for that reason alone it becomes necessary that the alarm be turned in quickly and accurately, which can best be done by the medium of a fire alarm telegraph system. Not many years have passed since a phone alarm sent the Department in an almost opposite direction from the fire and a building was reduced to ashes in the South End of Houston before the tired horses and firemen finally located it.

At the present time the city has 168 fire alarm signal boxes in service, 16 of which are private. A total of 14 new boxes were installed during the past year. The estimated value of the system is \$95,000 and its ordinary annual expense is about \$15,000.

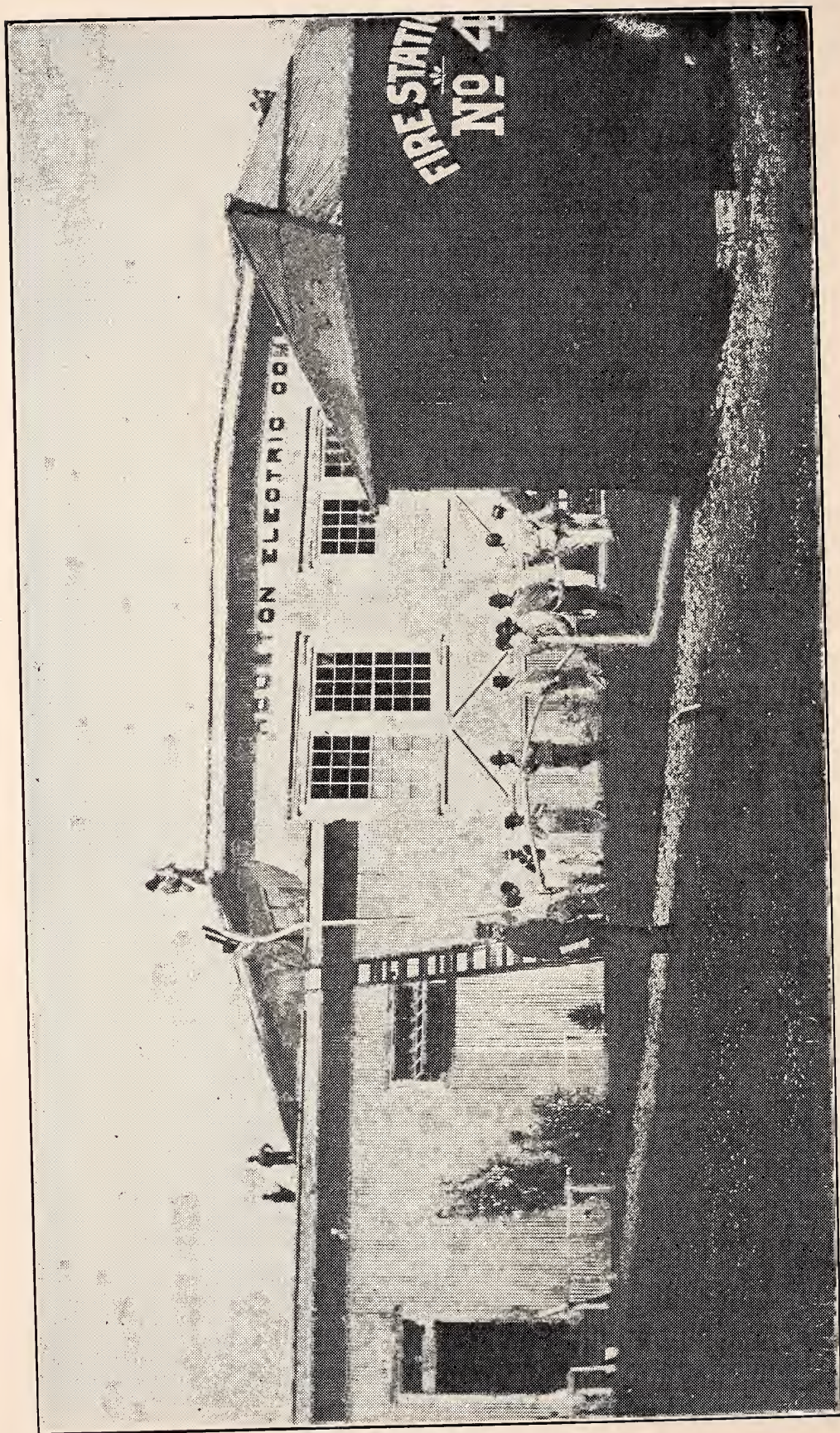
The Gamewell fire alarm and police patrol electric system is installed on the second floor of the Central Fire Station, and is under the personal supervision of Mr. George.

### **Firemen Under Civil Service.**

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On May 1, 1914, the Houston Fire Department came under civil service regulation. This work represents the holding of competitive examinations, medical, physical and moral, for all entrants to the Department service.

With the inauguration of civil service, the commission designated a probation period of one year, from April 1, 1914, to March 31, 1915, for all men subject to civil service regulation, then in the employ of the city. These men were all required to serve this probation period, or period of good behavior, before being placed in the classified service of the City of Houston, unless sooner removed by the mayor, council or head of department.



STREET RAILWAY FIRE DEPARTMENT DRILL

## Houston Electric Company Fire Department.

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GENERAL MANAGER David Daly of the Houston Electric Company fortified his belief in the old maxim, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," by having installed very complete fire-fighting methods in the care of an efficient Department composed of seven companies and a hose wagon contingent, at the company's repair shops and storage sheds in the northeastern portion of Houston. Aside from the working firemen, the buildings are equipped with the Rockwood automatic sprinkler system, while scores of water barrels and sand buckets are stationed inside and outside the buildings for instant use. The Houston Electric Company Fire Department was organized by J. D. McNally March 10, 1908. F. J. Bennett is master mechanic and L. A. Sargent, chief, with R. W. Welch, J. G. Porter, H. J. Feeney and C. A. McCracken, assistants.

So perfect has the Department become that not over 30 seconds elapse before a stream of water is produced by one of the companies after an alarm. The best time made by any company in laying hose and getting water was made by No. 3 Company in 19 seconds.

The hose company has F. Borowski as captain, Fred Pohl, O. D. Watson and Albert Ewald. This wagon responds to every alarm, while the companies only respond at given signal. The companies are as follows:

Company No. 1—Charles Nicholson, captain; Will Keys, Richard Fantop, Walter Graham, Sam Reed and Elroy Johnson.

Company No. 2—Hughey McLiver, captain; Jerry Turney, John Kerr, Harry Cload, Sam Peyton and W. D. Elliott.

Company No. 3—John Ewald, captain; Joe Genusa, Caston Furlow, H. Meyers, Joe Duszynski, Henry Williams.

Company No. 4—R. W. Welch, captain; Louis Anderson, Henry Haynes, Benny Henderson and Charles Vordick.

Company No. 5—E. D. Bennett, captain; Clarence Lacour, Louis Lemmon and Jake Smith.

Company No. 6—H. J. Feeney, captain; Joe Sealy, Emil Hans and Curtis Teal.

Company No. 7—Gus May, captain; R. E. Buss, W. L. Ostrom and Calvin Williams.

M. M. Aycock is captain of the night force, which is combined into one company.

## Southern Pacific Fire Department.

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THE Sunset-Central Railroad's extensive interests in Houston are of such importance that private fire protection is a first consideration by the management. Safety first was never more fully exemplified than when organized fire prevention was inaugurated in all the plants of the company in and about the city.

The extensive plant in the Fifth ward has an organized force, with a 300,000-gallon tank supply of water, two 6-inch artesian wells and pumps with 2000 gallons per minute capacity, and is connected with the city water system; Game-well fire alarm, with 15 boxes; hundreds of water barrels, sand buckets and hand extinguishers for instant use, and every known method for fire prevention.

J. S. Richards is fire marshal for the Sunset-Central lines; C. C. Perry is local chief; F. E. McGuckin, first assistant; F. E. George, second assistant; W. E. Ayres, chief electrician. The companies are named after cities and are as follows:

New Orleans Hose Company No. 1—Paul Leonard, captain; J. J. Foyet, lieutenant; J. B. Bowden, Lee Blum, C. Allen, John Coyle, Ben Bell, F. Wranker, W. Walker, F. Maroiana, L. Bissett, J. L. Reese, R. S. Pinson, A. Flessmer, G. Bergin.

Houston Chemical Company No. 2—R. Meyer, captain; A. Wach, lieutenant; E. Gunn, F. Stuart, K. Braddick, W. Coghlan, D. C. Hagenseck, J. Coyle, W. Crawford, M. P. Delcuze.

Galveston Hose Company No. 3—R. S. McNeely, captain; W. Pavey, lieutenant; I. Dorsery, Jack Rothwell, D. Saerlno, G. Saerlno.

San Antonio Chemical Company No. 4—J. J. Zimmerman, captain; W. Chalmers, lieutenant; F. Bohme, P. Tamborello, E. Rundell, C. Smith.

El Paso Hose Company No. 5—A. Thistlewood, captain; T. E. Rude, lieutenant; M. Jones, A. S. Davis, R. Meadows, W. Anderson.

The round house special chemical squad consists of nine men.

The Sunset water system is connected with the city system by a 12-inch main, and both Departments work in conjunction when fire occurs in the Fifth ward. The Department has regular drills twice a month.

#### H. & T. C. FIRE DEPARTMENT.

Henry Koenig is chief at the machine shops and F. G. Ollre chief at the car shops. Both plants are well equipped with drilled men and apparatus, and are connected with a 300,000-barrel reservoir and powerful pumps.

The Sunset-Central fire-fighting system extends to the creosote works north of the city, where F. Lawson is chief, and to the freight and cotton sheds of the company.

## Houston Heights Fire Department.

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**H**OUSTON HEIGHTS is an independent municipality five miles west of Houston, with an estimated population of 15,000. "The Heights," as it is commonly called, is practically a part of Houston, as nearly all of its inhabitants are either employed in or derive a living from Houston, and as it has but few business houses its trade is conducted here. Its street car line is one operated through Houston by the Stone & Webster people. Yet it is a thriving and desirable residential city and among its people are some of the best families in Texas. Its school system is creditable, the churches indicative of a God-loving and God-fearing people; its society of high order, and its morale far above the average in cities of like size.

The local administration is headed by Mayor James B. Marmion; C. E. Butzer, city auditor; S. J. Wimberly, assessor and collector; M. L. O. Andrews, fire commissioner; P. L. Borgstrom, fire marshal.

Hugh Montgomery is chief of the Fire Department, the central station being located on the first floor of the new city hall on Twelfth street, just off the Boulevard. The upper story is used for the city offices with a main auditorium for council meetings, lodge purposes and mass gatherings.

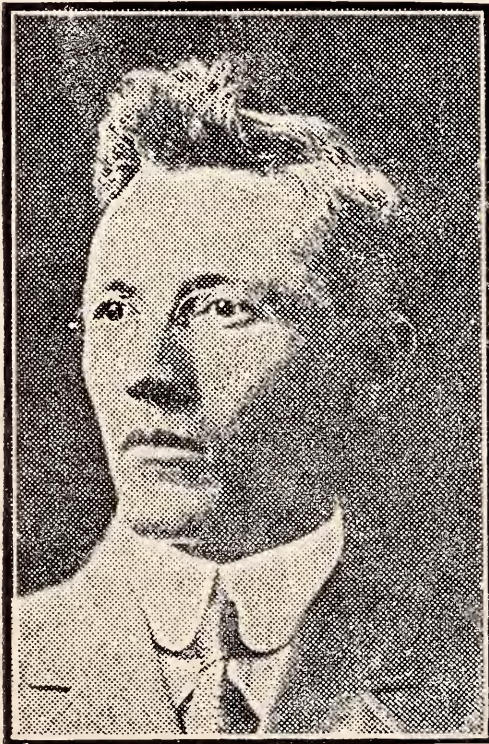
Volunteer fire service was instituted September 1, 1908, with a two-tank chemical engine. The company at once bought a lot and constructed a building on Yale street between Ninth and Tenth avenues. Dr. Gunn was president; H. M. Richter, secretary; C. J. Eisenhour, treasurer; Horace Olive, chief, who served the two years of the volunteer regime. Dr. William Olive was the last president.

Not meeting with substantial recognition from the citizens after two years of efficient service, the Department disbanded and sold the chemical engine to Lufkin township. Houston Heights then had no fire protection for several years until the municipality purchased a chemical engine

**MAYOR JAMES B. MARMION.**

Mayor Marmion of Houston Heights is ex-officio head of all departments of the municipal government. Reared in the Fifth Ward of Houston, he fought fires in the volunteer days with Brooks No. 5. Served as Harris County Commissioner. He is personally interested in the Heights Fire Department and the new city hall and fire station is a monument to his progressive spirit. At the annual convention of Mayors of Texas, at Greenville, November 11-12, 1915, Mayor Marmion was elected first vice president.

The mechanical genius of Mayor Marmion and Fire Chief Montgomery is evident in their construction of the hook and ladder truck and the chief's car in use in the Heights Department, both finished in artistic effectiveness.

**M. L. O. ANDREWS.**

Alderman M. L. O. Andrews of Houston Heights is Fire Commissioner of the city, and head of the Andrews Advertising Service in Houston. He was reared in Houston, but has resided at the Heights eight years. Mr. Andrews was chief of the Navasota Fire Department for a number of years and is a past president and life member of the State Volunteer Firemen's Association. In his junior days he assisted in organizing two of the "kid" fire companies of Houston.

and located it at the corner of Boulevard and Thirteenth street. J. L. Durham was the first paid chief.

Hugh Montgomery was appointed chief engineer on March 1, 1915. His crew consists of M. T. Robinson, captain; Ed. Kohlman, lieutenant; G. K. Parker, O. M. Phillips, Roy Crush, S. Lowe and E. Hueboetter, pipemen and ladder-men. The apparatus comprises the chief's auto combination chemical, auto hook and ladder combination and two auto hose wagons. During the first eight months of the current year (1915) the Department made 89 runs, and the fire loss was only one-fourth of the property involved. The Sanitarium fire on June 1, 1915, was the most important loss the Heights has sustained. Chief Montgomery was connected with the Houston Fire Department for seven and a half years before going to the Heights, and the efficiency of his Department has been the means of giving the Heights a No. 1 insurance rating, which but few towns in Texas enjoy.



#### HUGH MONTGOMERY.

Hugh Montgomery is chief of the Houston Heights Fire Department and is making a splendid record as a fire fighting executive. He is still a young man, but understands the game, and was for seven years a member of the Houston Department before removing to the Heights. Chief Montgomery is constantly adding to the apparatus of his Department by building trucks and engines out of automobile frames, thus saving many dollars to his city. The efficient work of his department has reduced the fire risk to a first-class rate in the Heights.



**H. M. RICHTER.**

H. M. Richter, alderman of the First Ward and Mayor Pro Tem, was secretary of the Heights Volunteer Department and an active fire fighter when his young and aggressive little city needed volunteer service. He not only gave of his time to sustain the Department, but contributed financial help. Mr. Richter is a lawyer, well versed in tax and land matters, and is Land and Tax Commissioner of the Houston Oil Company.

**S. J. WIMBERLY.**

S. J. Wimberly is disbursing officer for the Houston Heights Fire Department and serving his third term as city assessor and collector. Mr. Wimberly always was a volunteer in all matters for public good. He has lived in Harris County 23 years and in Houston Heights 14 years. Mr. Wimberly is a member of the firm of Wimberly Bros., grocers, and one of the substantial citizens of Houston's suburban neighbor.

## Brunner Fire Department.

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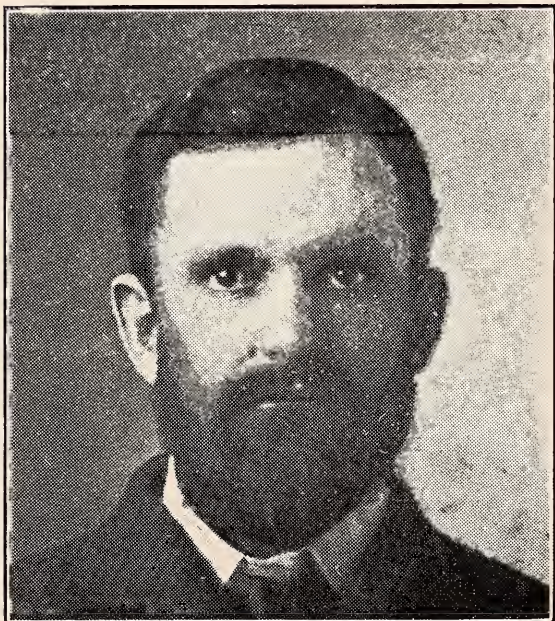
**I**N the late '80s the Brunner Engine Company was instituted, with W. P. Siebert, chief; Ed. L. Fetzer, assistant chief; F. J. Morton, foreman; F. W. Pitschmann, assistant foreman; John Donnelly, engineer. There was no water save that provided by private cisterns and wells for domestic use, and the steamer was moved away in 1899.

A small company was then gotten together for protective purposes and an extension ladder wagon performed service for a while. The continued growth of the town suggested better fire protection and on June 23, 1904, Brunner Fire Company No. 1 was instituted by A. H. Suess, president; P. E. Rasch, secretary; D. D. Pittman, treasurer; Charles Kampe, chief; Gus Schwarzburg, assistant chief; C. W. Floeck, chemical engineer; H. D. Layne, pump foreman; F. B. Linnenberger, N. Anderson, G. A. Pitschmann, W. F. Brenner, Wm. Platke, M. Bullard, Gus Patotzka, J. F. Crawford, Jules Patotzka, S. E. Davis, W. W. Rainbolt, W. M. Fonville, A. W. Slates, J. E. Gibson, August Steffens, Joe Gloger, S. D. Strong, G. A. Linnenberger, W. W. Strong, R. L. McCarty, Louis Thiel, J. A. McClure and A. A. Wood. The apparatus comprised a hand pumper and a chemical wagon, stationed on property owned by Emile Rasch, and for several years the volunteers served a noble and useful purpose, until 1913, when the engines were sold for junk.

At the date of disbandment the officers were: P. E. Rasch, president; Gus Schwarzburg, chief; Jules Patotzka, vice-president; Gus Linnenberger, secretary; Paul Roemer, treasurer.

**P. E. RASCH.**

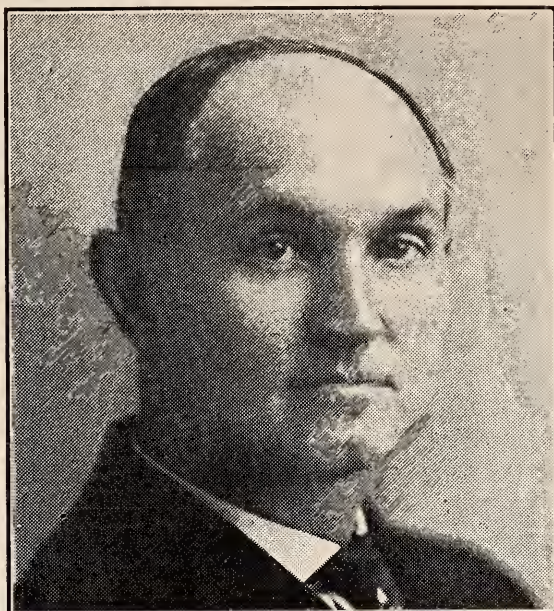
Emile Rasch was an active volunteer fireman, having been connected with Mechanic No. 6 (1875) and later one of the Brunner Department. Mr. Rasch is a Mason (Gray Lodge No. 329), and member of the Woodmen and Maccabees. He won distinction by winning the last foot race held by the Volunteers at the Fair Grounds in 1881. His opponents were Arthur Fitzpatrick, Numa Keck, Tony Artusy and John Stadtler in an hour go-as-you-please, Mr. Rasch winning the prize and making 11.7 miles.

**J. A. McCLURE.**

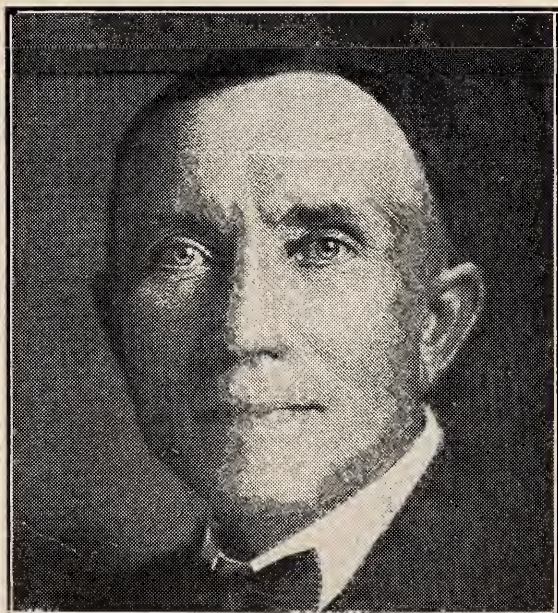
This picture shows Mr. McClure just after he returned from a mine prospecting trip several years ago, and his friends will hardly recognize him. He was active in the Brunner Fire Department and gave of his time and money to sustain the volunteer service, and to further all progressive movements during his seventeen years of citizenship. Mr. McClure is in the grocery and feed business at the corner of Washington street and Brunner avenue.

**W. M. FONVILLE.**

Billy Fonville is the town druggist and general information bureau at Brunner, No. 4702 Washington street, where he has conducted business for ten years. When Brunner had a Volunteer Fire Department, Mr. Fonville was on the roster of active members and gave physical and financial help to its success. As one of the leaders of that section he is pleased at the extension of the Department service and the location of a station in Brunner.

**PAUL J. ROEMER.**

Paul Roemer was treasurer in the Brunner Fire Department in volunteer days and, unlike many others in the service, disliked giving up the activity of fire-fighting. Mr. Roemer has lived in the Brunner section of the city for fifteen years and has established and successfully conducts a concrete product manufactory on his premises near Washington avenue. He is a well-to-do citizen and progressive in all matters pertaining to public welfare.



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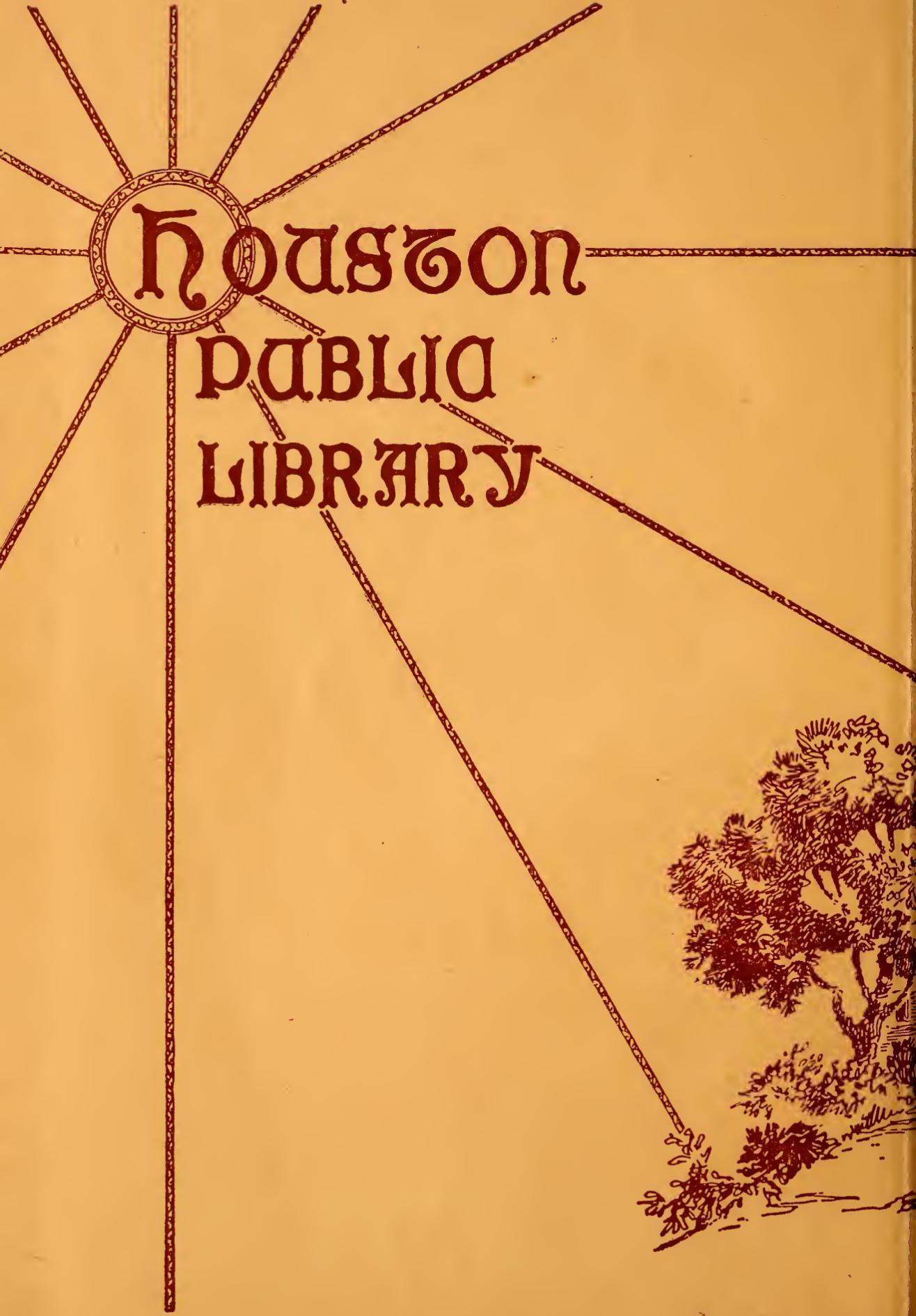
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